■ Entertainment
Not a Valentine story

■ Business/B1
Foreign investments slump 54%

■ World/A9
Valentine's Day dates back to erotic fest

■ Lifestyle/C2
A volcano of colors

Martial law victims, dapat bang bayaran?

Fiesta revelry couldn't ease mourners' grief

By Nikko Dizon

THE UPROAR from the fiesta celebration on Libertad Street in Pasay City echoed through the second floor of the Veronica Memorial Chapelle, where Marine Private First Class Lawrence Ivy ...

His mother Nilda leaned on the white ...

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, February 14, 2005 • 36 pages / vol. IX / no. 68

website: www.inq7.net

Tatad: Pagcor operating with expired franchise

PHILIPPINE Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor), long rumored to be Malacañang's biggest cash cow, has been operating illegally since 2002, according to lawyer Jose Francisco Tatad.

Tatad, who now heads the Citizens vs Corruption Task Force, said yesterday the Pagcor franchise expired on Jan. 1, 2002, as provided ...

Sulu death toll rises to 70

Troops, rebs in 'shouting distance'

By PDI Mindanao Bureau

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Fighting within surrounding distance of each other. More guerrillas killed three more soldiers and wounded 13 others in a bid to repel advancing government forces on Jolo Island, officials said yesterday.

Flying a succession of sorties, air force OV-10 warplanes dropped 260-pound bombs on suspected guerrilla positions as the number of refugees swelled to 18,000.

The bombing began at 9 a.m. yesterday. Later in the afternoon, OV-10s were still taking off for strikes on Jolo.

The fresh fighting raised to 70 the overall government death toll against more than 40 killed which the military said the insurgents, led by Ustadz Habier Malik, had suffered.

The military has not released the identities of the three latest fatalities, but Army spokesperson Maj. Buenaluna Socorro said they were two privates and a sergeant.

"They were not units enemy lies and wanter-wrotes," Socorro said.

The 12 soldiers wounded in Monday's clashes around two towns included Maj. Dar...

TWO Marines secure the perimeter of the airport as more soldiers disembark from a C-130 plane on Jolo Island for a military offensive to crush followers of Moro rebel leader Nur Misuari.

THOUSANDS of Filipino couples took tips in Lyric Valentine kissing festival at Manila's Quirino... Their effort failed to surpass last year's feat that made it on the Guinness Book of World Records.

More Pinoys not happy with love life, poll shows

By Tarra F. Quismundo

Inbox

SAID you found your other (girl/boy friend) today?

Not yet? Blame on you.

According to a nationwide survey published yesterday, less than half of the women in the country were happy with their love life...

For Muslim-Christian pair, love conquers all

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—He is Muslim, she is the... Catholic.

But despite the wide religious and cultural divide, their parents disapproved, and the conflict is ... Mindanao, love conquered all for newlyweds Abul Khayr Alonto J... and Michelle Dobles.

Khayr, 28, is the son of [late] Abul Khayr Alonto, one of the original Moro National Liberation Front leaders. Michelle, 27, is the niece of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales.

Khayr explained the significance of their multicultural union: "We feel the clearest message that we can ...

Valentine House opens, but owner stays single

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SAN JOSE CITY—Today a 68-year-old single woman here will open her house in Meadow Hills to showcase a collection of about 2,000 heart-shaped furnishings, accessories and knickknacks.

Hida Ereña, a native of Santa... Barsa Sur, has been collecting Valentine trinkets for 18 years now.

Her house in Meadow Hills is known as the "Santa House" because during Christmas, she unpacks thousands of Santa Claus trinkets and puts them on display ...

Rice charms Europe, but skepticism remains

By Amando Doronila

UN SECRETARY of State Condoleezza Rice concluded in the weekend a 10-day diplomatic offensive which saw her visiting half a dozen European capitals in a bid to repair the ... strained Atlantic alliance ...

ANALYSIS

... repaired by the Atlantic-led invasion of Iraq.

At the end of Rice's trip to Europe, nine of the European Union, nine members of some of the ... report pessimism that the US-led ... could heal the European ... over whether the second administration of President George W. Bush was on the way to ... to remain ... itself from ... manager to peacemaker.

Rice's extraordinary devotion to ... France and Germany—two of the strongest opponents of the ... on Iraq—lost its soothing effect when the US official refused ... up with a tough warning to Iran that ... arms attention to ... script to build a nuclear weapon ... received his support of terrorism.

In London and Berlin, Rice refused to rule out the possibility of an attack on Iran—a possibility raised by US Vice President Richard Cheney who said ... ago that Israel might decide to ... Bush's cautious decision ...

HOLOCAUST IN MANILA

Massacre of Agustinians, San Juan de Dios staff

By Alice Colet-Villadolid
(Part 6 of a series)

DESPITE repeated orders from Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita for a complete withdrawal to mountain ... Adm. Sanji Iwabuchi of the Imperial Japanese Manila Naval Defense Force and his troops stayed on in Manila, believing they had a mission to hold Manila Bay and its environs. They ... the harbors, ... and the ... buildings along Dadre ... Burgos Drive.

Upon hearing that US Gen. Douglas MacArthur's forces were already in Batangas by Feb. 3, 1945, Japanese commanders ordered all ... civilians to ... their ... homes and proceed to the San Agustin Church.

Alfonso Aluit recounts in his book "By Sword and Fire":

"The San Agustin church and monastery by this time were full of hostages—men, women and children. The church ... the monastery and children. The men were ... into the ...

ESTELITA JUICO: America, you came too late.

DR. ANTONIO LAHOZ, on wedding day with bride Basilia Bayaborda to church in the place of ruins of the Sto. Domingo Church in Intramuros.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Second FRONTPAGE
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2005

House to consider lower VAT on oil firms, IPPs

By Carlito Pablo, Christine O. Avendaño, Norman Bordadora and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE HOUSE of Representatives is reconsidering its earlier plans to lift the value-added tax exemption being enjoyed by oil companies and independent power producers after the latter warned of higher prices of petroleum products and electricity.

Rep. Jesli Lapus (NPC, Tarlac), chair of the House committee on ways and means, said the House may impose a lower VAT of 6 percent on oil firms and 8% instead of the full 12 percent.

"The Department of Finance estimates the imposed 6 percent increased VAT on 6 percent instead of 12 percent on power to electricity cost to be only 2.67 percent and 5.26 percent for industrial and residential customers, respectively," Lapus said in a statement.

Lapus said that a 6 percent VAT will raise transport fares by an estimated P0.13, P0.72 and P0.22, the minimum or flag-down fares of jeepneys, taxis and buses, respectively.

"These represent a fare rate increase ranging from only 1.6 percent to 2.4 percent depending on the Land Transportation Franchising Regulatory Board's figures on the share of fuel cost in transport fares," Lapus said.

The House is currently deliberating a measure which removes the VAT exemptions enjoyed by IPPs, oil firms, doctors and lawyers, and in the purchase of seven-going vessels. The measure is a follow-up to the House's approval of a bill increasing the VAT from 10 percent to 12 percent.

The Senate has yet to come up with its own version.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said yesterday the Senate would soon tackle the VAT bill, after passing last Friday the proposed P907.95 billion budget for 2005.

Drilon said that Sen. Ralph Recto was "ready" to draft the committee report on the eVAT measure.

Recto, chair of the Senate ways and means committee, told reporters Friday that he may come up the committee report by Feb. 21.

He said the committee would hold two more hearings before wrapping up its work.

Senators Juker Enrile and Manuel Villar today denounced as blackmail and anti-working the suppose threat by oil firms and power generators to raise petroleum prices and electricity if they were subjected to the 12 percent VAT.

The Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association warned of an 11 percent increase in petroleum prices while the power sector warned of a power outages of 90-95 per followed hour.

Lapus made the announcement of a possible reduced VAT in the context of the House's supposed "reinstatement to provide more safety nets to the poor and middle class."

"Among the safety nets for the poor and middle class, the House is mulling reducing the existing VAT rate from 10 percent to 6 percent on processed foods like sardines, mackerel, corn, bread and noodles," Lapus said.

"Also to be included in the bill on exemptions is liquefied petroleum gas," he added.

"The House is committed to providing more safety nets to the poor and middle class to cushion the impact of the VAT and counter misperceptions being raised by anti-VAT proponents against the VAT measure," Lapus said.

Various groups are set to stage mass action nationwide to protest the increase in the VAT as the lower prepares to tackle the controversial tax measure this week.

THE MILITANT party list group Anakpawis sponsored yesterday such races and other children's games in Quezon City to build awareness and share pressures against the increase in the value-added tax (VAT).

'How does Salonga know where Marcos loot is?'

VICTIMS of abuse during martial law yesterday questioned former Presidential Commission on Good Government chair Jovito Salonga's assertion that part of the recovered Marcos wealth had already been set aside by the government to compensate the victims.

"How did he know the money had already been set aside for the victims?" asked Marie Hilao Enriquez, one of about 10,000 rights abuse victims who had filed and won the Honolulu class suit that had sought indemnity from the estate of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

"We cannot take back, kiss and make Makoy[Salonga's alias that the tycoon] has been set aside for the victims. We are getting related signals from the government," Enriquez said.

Salonga on Saturday said the claimants were "talking through their hat" in expressing fears that the $683 million in recovered ill-gotten Marcos wealth had already been spent by the government.

"I hasta, especially since we took up to (Salonga) as a fellow victim," Enriquez told the tycoon. "With due respect, he should help instead of berating former victims."

Salonga was among the thousands former rights groups after Marcos declared martial law in 1972.

Salonga defended President Macapagal-Arroyo from allegations that the recovered Marcos assets had been subjected to fund abuse. He said the money is manageable the abuse victims had already been set aside and that the better part of the loot would go to subsidizing the land reform program.

The former senator also compared the rights abuse victims to the political opposition, saying they also would not get their act together. He said disagreements within the claimants' ranks contributed to the delay in the passage of legislation that would finally compensate the victims.

Norman Bordadora

Germany warns RP over expropriated airport terminal

GERMANY has urged the Philippine government to promptly compensate Fraport AG, one of the members of the consortium that built the repossessed Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 project, or risk tarnishing all foreign investors and souring this offshoot until Sunday.

Through its ambassador to Manila, the German government expressed its concern late last month to Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo over the December takeover of the Philippine International Air Terminal Co. (PIATCO) consortium's P630-million Nido Terminal 3 project, officials said.

Fraport AG is a member of the Piatco consortium which built the airport terminal.

In a formal letter, German Ambassador Axel Hallmann Meinhauer expressed concern over the "particular manner of expropriation and the political signal it may send" to potential investors in the country.

The envoy also urged Manila to abide by the terms of a 1997 bilateral treaty on reciprocal promotion of investments and to stick to its commitment to provide "just compensation" to the terminal concessions project, according to the concern released by Malacañang.

The German government called for a "speedy and mutually satisfactory solution" to the expropriated investments in the "interest of avoiding a hitch in Philippine-German relations."

President Macapagal-Arroyo plans to open the terminal later this year after the government won a lower court order to take over the facility from the consortium, in which Fraport has an estimated 20 percent stake.

Singapore and Filipino firms comprise the other consortium members. Fraport is seeking compensation of $165 million, and the case is under separate international arbitration proceedings in Washington and Singapore.

The terminal has been mothballed since 2000, when President Arroyo revealed the concession's "build-operate-transfer" contract with the government on grounds that certain terms were illegally renegotiated by her deposed predecessor President Joseph Estrada in 1998.

"The Philippine government is firmly committed to paying just compensation in Philippine and in church-stolen in accord with the rule of law, including international law," Romulo said in a letter to Mr. Arroyo, which was released to the press over the weekend.

Mr. Arroyo last month won backing for the expropriation from the local United States, European, Canadian, Australian New Zealand and South Korean chambers-of-commerce.

They said the government action was "clearly in the best national interest."

A lower court last month ordered the government to make a $62.3-million down payment to the consortium but the Supreme Court later ordered a temporary suspension of any such payments. AFP

Why Mike gives Gloria one white rose

A LOGEN some ... (1) red, one white.

That is what President Macapagal-Arroyo will receive today from First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, as lovers mark Valentine's Day.

"When they were younger, many admirers would send roses to the President. The white rose was the signal the bouquet of flowers was from the First Gentleman," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye explained.

From there on, Bunye said, the First Gentleman made it a point to give his wife the unique bouquet during Valentine's Day and other special personal occasions. Jachi Lobog-Arevalinas

Go slow on Cha-cha, advises oldest solon

By Carlos Pabio

SAYING he was espousing the wisdom of experience, the oldest member of the House of Representatives yesterday counselled against rushing to amend the 1987 Constitution, especially through a constituent assembly.

Rep. Bartolome Town (Lakas, Negros Oriental), who turns 92 in April, said that before the House passes for a constituent assembly, which would be composed of senators and members sitting in joint plenary, Charter change proponents might do well to learn from the lessons of the past.

Town noted that Congress convened into a constituent assembly three times in recent history. The first time was in May 1935 "but nothing came out of it," he said.

He said the assembly failed because "lawmakers failed to agree on any of the amendments advanced."

Congress again convened into a constituent assembly in April 1960 but the voters rejected proposed amendments passed by the assembly in a consequent plebiscite.

Town said the proposals then sought to increase the membership of the House and to allow them to run as delegates in the 1971 Constitutional Convention.

"Voters ratified only the third resolution calling for a Con-con," Town said.

Congress convened into a constituent assembly for the third time in June 1969, according to Town.

But, he said, "instead of proposing amendments, the assembly simply endorsed a measure governing the election of delegates to the 1971 Con-con."

"Instead of working another constituent assembly, Town said the House may want to consider holding a plebiscite first to "determine the genuine sentiments of Filipinos on major reform issues."

"If the people, for example, strongly indorse in a plebiscite that they really do keep the presidential form of government, then there's no point in pushing for a shift to a parliamentary system," Town said. "Because it will surely be defeated by voters since they are asked to ratify it."

Town was commenting on the recent approval by the Senate committee on constitutional amendments of a measure calling for a constituent assembly for the purpose of amending the 1987 Constitution in order to effect a shift to a parliamentary form of government.

Vast majority of country's police stations 'squatters'

By Christian V. Esguerra

WHILE the headquarters of the Philippine National Police is undergoing a major facelift, most of the country's local police stations do not even own the lots or buildings they occupy, making them virtual "squatters."

The PNP said that of its 1,595 city and municipal police stations nationwide, 84 percent, or a total of 1,339, were "squatting," mostly in the city and town halls of the local government units.

Supt. Francisco Llamas, director of PNP's Engineering Service, said only 256 police stations across the country had their own lots and buildings.

The PNP is now in a rush to close the wide gap. It plans to build at least 634 police stations nationwide over the next three to five years.

The idea, Llamas explained, was to give policemen a "sense of pride with a presentable headquarters."

At present, many local police stations are dependent on local governments, not just in terms of office space, but also for basic necessities like gasoline and office supplies.

"Ideally, a police station must have its own lot and building," Llamas said. "It has to be detached from town halls so it would have its own identity, so there would be the idea of independence."

Considering the huge discrepancy, some police officers have questioned the ongoing facelift of PNP national headquarters at Camp Crame, which is expected to be completed early next month.

The P5-million budget for the renovation could build at least two stations in the country's far-flung regions, they said. A "basic" police station costs at least P1.7 million.

Although the PNP's top generals seem bent on making only their own offices look good, Llamas said it didn't mean that the foot soldiers were being neglected.

"Actually, we build an average of 30 police stations yearly," he told the INQUIRER in an interview. "We just have to be patient. This thing cannot be solved overnight. And if only the public could view our stations in the provinces, they'll see that they're not as deplorable as they think."

Until the PNP could provide legitimate homes for its 1,339 "homeless" stations, thousands of policemen would have no choice but to "squat."

This should explain why citizens who file complaints at police stations are sometimes asked to shell out money. Neighborhood cops can't even buy bond paper.

During the term of Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. as PNP chief, he ordered the construction of at least 11 stations in the poorest regions in the country, the INQUIRER learned.

Among these regions was his home province of Zambales where the provincial police office used to look no better than an abandoned ancestral house. The wooden headquarters was built when the late President Ramon Magsaysay was still defense minister in the 1950s.

Injured media men get benefits

MEDIA persons who get hurt covering the news are covered by benefits from the Employees Compensation Commission (ECC) as long as their employers keep up their monthly premiums.

The ECC gave medical benefits to ABS-CBN reporter Doland Castro, one of the 16 people wounded when they were caught in the crossfire between policemen and robbers who had held up the Banco de Oro branch in Valenzuela City on Dec. 14, 2004.

The ECC's Quick Response Team proceeded to Medical City General Hospital in Pasig City to inform Castro of the commission's coverage and the benefits available to the victims of work-connected contingencies.

The QRT also visited ABC 5 cameraman Ed de Guzman and ABS-CBN Radyo Patrol reporter Jun Lingcoran who were injured while covering typhoons "Winnie" and "Yoyong" in December last year.

The car De Guzman and his colleagues, reporter Karen Lim and driver Albert Selda, were riding in struck a tree in San Leonardo, Nueva Ecija, on Dec. 2, 2004. The team was going to Gabaldon town in the same province and later to Dingalan in neighboring Aurora.

De Guzman suffered bruises and a bone fracture after he was thrown from the car and hit a tree. He was airlifted to Manila by the Philippine Navy from the Nueva Ecija Doctors Hospital in Cabanatuan City.

Lingcoran was hit by a rock that crushed his right ankle as he and his news team were in Real, Quezon, on Dec. 5 crossing rice paddies when a landslide struck. *Jerome Aning*

SPORTS

Jenny-Dorothy 5 shots behind

Japanese, Scottish pairs show way

THE PHILIPPINES' Dorothy Delasin (right) and Jennifer Rosales celebrate after pars in the second round.

GEORGE, South Africa—Japan and Scotland shared a one-stroke lead over Italy after Saturday's second round of the World Cup.

Playing alternate shot on a breezy afternoon, Izildeia Mellore and Jaime Monde scrubbed for a 4-under 68 with five birdies on the front nine, but the team disappeared on the back nine on the wind-jaded legs.

Japanese teenager Ai Miyazato and teammate Rui Kitada shot a 1-under 71 after opening on 69 day with a 68. The Japanese pair bogeyed the last two holes, dropping into a share of the lead on the 36th hole at the Fancourt Country Club course.

"While the wrong wind and the difficult greens, it was a difficult afternoon," Miyazato said. "We wanted to make birdies on Bogie Row, but it just proved unfortunately difficult."

Scotland's round was built on dogged consistency once Beth Bell and Joanne Morley got their act together.

"We spent the day simply trying to hit the fairways and greens," Matthew said.

After opening with a 68, Italy's Diana Luna and Giulia Sergas slipped to a 75.

Little Rose and Umm Cao-Anne of Canada, who shared the lead with Italy after the first round at 1-under, managed a 74 to fall five off the lead at 140, with the Philippine team of Jennifer Rosales and Dorothy Delasin, who continued for a 73.

South Korea was two shots off the lead—a composite 142—after a 1-under 68. The Korean team of Jeong Jang and Se Ree Jang, tied off in the morning, ended an eagle on the par-5 16th 5.

The American team of Meg Mallon and Beth Daniel, England's Laura Davies and Karen Stupples, and Australia's Karrie Webb and Rachel Hetherington were three off the lead.

The Americans and English shot 73s, and Australia had a 75.

"It's a very tough golf course with very difficult greens so we're pleased with 73 because four-some [alternate shots] is never easy," said Miyazato. "We got off to a good start, and were two under through six holes, with birdies at the fourth and sixth holes. I think the key to a solid round today was both of us hitting some very good approach shots without irons.

"We weren't too disappointed to finish with an bogeys. The course has plenty of trouble up it."

Valentine House opens, but owner stays single

Why Santa Claus, and not Isa [illegible] never) on window?

Because Santa grew up in a town called Santa, established by [illegible] Nick, she told the [illegible].

Because of the dismal economy and the discouraging television news reports about the [illegible] economic woes, Santa decided to turn her Santa Claus obsession into "business" for "don't shaped" tokens.

"Everything I invested and in [illegible] I built [illegible] from this house and from [illegible]," she said.

Valentine wreaths

Days after the New Year, Santa did not put away her Christmas tree. Instead, she filled it with red heart pendants, heart-shaped pillows and twine painted with the hearts.

Now, Valentine wreaths hang on her doors. Hearts dot her shower curtain. A heart-shaped tapestry covers her walls.

Santa is most proud of a humble-looking stone-stitched decoration that says, "Busy Hands, Happy heart," because she made it herself.

In this Valentine frenzy, every [illegible] and tabletop that wants of figurines and stuffed toys that bear Valentine's Day motifs. Her couch is laid out with heart-shaped and heart-decorated cushions sent to her from the United States.

She forgot to marry

When the business visited Santa, she was holding a small heavy carriage with a heart, which she had bought from the mall.

"I am attracted to anything that has a heart. I try to spend no more than ₱200 for each piece, but when I get the urge, I spend more," she said.

She recognized her appetite for [illegible] Valentine House, but was prepared for all the wanting that was sure to come her way.

Santa confessed that she "forgot" to marry a Baguio sweetheart 40 years ago because she was busy taking care of her [illegible] children.

She said the children grew up, had kids of their own, who in turn grew [illegible] in her care, making her a single mother once over.

Single and blessed

Santa said she goes out with other single women in Baguio, but "no one talks seriously" about the lack of...or absence of...[illegible].

"In fact, we gossip about each other's future lovers then we giggle like schoolchildren," she said.

She said her friends do not really enjoy being single because their generations frowns at growing old, unmarried, without children.

In contrast, Santa said being single suits her.

"I can do what I please. I am not barely because I have many children. I don't regret not getting married," she said in Pilipino.

Santa revealed that she had her first boyfriend when she was a teenager. He was from the city. Their [illegible] here to help [illegible] [illegible].

The relationship lasted for four years, but nothing compelled them to get married, she said.

No sparks

Santa said she entertained many suitors, but no one caught her attention except this Canadian, who became her pen pal when she was in her late 50s.

The man actually came to the Philippines to meet her. "But sparks didn't fly and I was no longer interested in marrying anyone," she said.

Santa also traveled to various parts of the country on exhibitions over by the Methodist Church. She visited Tarlac, Benguet, Pangasinan, Ilocos Norte, and parts of Baliuag and Aparri.

Eventually, she would come home to a lonely house. This, however, did not change her views on marriage.

She explained: "The children I helped raise provided that when I am old and feeble they will take care of me. Isn't this why people get married?"

More Pinoys . . .

Could this be why there were fewer couples hissing at the "couplekiss 2," a midnight kiss fest held at Manila's Rizal Park on Saturday?

Based on the poll, the proportion of women who said they were very happy with their love life was 41 percent, down by 18 percentage points since the last two years. Among men, it was 50 percent, down by seven points. The poll was conducted from June 25 to Dec. 2 last year by the Social Weather Stations.

But if the numbers the poll found true, the organizers only 1,500 couples who registered for yesterday's kiss fest, down from last year's 5,000 couples who smashed the at least 28 records on Valentine's Day for "Longest[illegible]," breaking Chile's record of 4,445 couples in the Guinness Book of World Records.

The poll also found that overall, only 46 percent of Filipino adults were happy with their love life, 8 percentage points more than in 2003.

Forty-four percent said their love life could be happier, up from 32 percent in November 2003, but in 11 percent said they had no love life at all, unchanged from the previous survey.

Satisfaction with their love life declined across socioeconomic classes: The ABC classes or the richest brackets had a 52-percent satisfaction rating compared to 43 percent for Class D and 44 percent for Class E.

The poll had an error margin of plus or minus three percentage points.

Lovepalooza 2

Thousands of couples celebrated Valentine's Day a day early by locking lips for 30 seconds...longer if they got carried away—at what organizers dubbed "Lovepalooza 2."

They gathered Saturday night as bright lit fireworks along Roxas Boulevard, [illegible] [illegible] before, dotted and [illegible].

Following a 30-second countdown, thousands of couples kissed at midnight until strains of "What the World Needs Now is Love." Fireworks went off over Manila Bay and cheers erupted.

Leading the kiss fest was Mayor Lito Atienza and his wife Evelina, and local officials and their spouses.

"The Filipino is a million times for the Philippines. We hope to be able to spread to each and everyone of our countrymen that we should forget [illegible] in our hearts, what we should spread is love," said Atienza, clad in a red flood shirt, his wood entire.

This year's event was aimed at "a million kisses, a million hearts, beats, and probably a million people falling in love for the second time around," according to a statement from Endever Philippines, one of the organizers.

The event was held simultaneously at midnight in at least four cities nationwide. While large crowds turned out, the figures appeared to be well below target.

"We're not hosting any record this time. We're building a tradition only," said Endever's Mia Pesaresi.

Spreading love

No records may have been broken, but Lovepalooza 2 was the definitive expression of spreading love.

Thousands of couples from Manila, Cebu, Davao and Angeles cities locked lips, celebrating love and the country's honor of making it to the Guinness Book of World Records—or tried but just to be the first time.

Manila's famed Pajak Salvajunt Park in Malate became the center of celebrations, with bands [illegible] and fireworks, singers Kyla and Christian Bautista performing love songs.

Police estimated that 300,000 had turned up, filling the stretch of Roxas Boulevard from Presidential Diokno Avenue to Padre Burgos Avenue. Traffic [illegible] [illegible] and was cleared to traffic—spilling into the eastbound streets of Ermita and San Andres.

More than 400 uniformed and undercover cops were deployed to keep the crowd secure—and safe for condom-and Chief Insp. Pedro Bulaong, director of the Manila Police District. With reports from AFP and AP

Malaysia tries 'soft approach' on Filipino illegals

By TJ Burgonio

MALAYSIA is employing the "soft approach" to woo thousands of Filipinos illegally working in Sabah to pick up their legal and return to their provinces in the southern Philippines, foreign affairs officials said yesterday.

"If they [illegals] are apprehended, they're given seven days to leave the country. If they [don't] and get caught again, they'll be deported and banned to ever leave or return to Malaysia," said a Department of Foreign Affairs official in an interview.

"So the crackdown is not being carried out with impunity... what they're doing is a soft approach," added the official, who asked not to be named.

Malaysia adopted the tack after suspending its crackdown on the 1.5 million undocumented migrants, including at least 170,000 Filipinos, in the country on Feb. 1. The suspension is to run from then.

The suspension came the day after the amnesty program for illegal migrants expired on Jan. 31. The deadline was the second for the program.

Foreign Undersecretary Ave Bautista confirmed the new Malaysian approach, noting that 22 Filipinos who came home recently were not deported but were asked to "leave voluntarily" under the policy also known as "operation sabay."

"Under that policy, if [have an undocumented] alien who was discovered, they will be asked to leave voluntarily. They will not be detained or deported," Bautista had told reporters earlier.

In his note of the thousands of Filipinos in Sabah have surfaced, though, if the "submarine of Sabah" who supposedly boarded boats to return to Tawi-Tawi or Mindanao but, 7 years ago page,

"Many don't have any plans of leaving Sabah. They don't consider themselves Filipinos or Malaysians. They're plainly Tausug... they're like gypsies. They get married and raised their families there," the official said.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo has instructed the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur to step up the campaign to convince undocumented Filipinos to voluntarily return home to avoid being arrested by the Malaysian authorities.

A team, composed of Consuls Antonio Morales and Horacio Jimeno, was dispatched to Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, Tawau, Labuan Darussalam and Kudat in northeastern Sabah to look for undocumented Filipinos.

"The team shall encourage undocumented Filipinos to unconditionally return to the Philippines so that they would be prevented in the referring of workers, this time with the proper working permits, visas and documentation," said foreign affairs spokesperson Gilberto Asuncion.

The Department of Labor and Employment, meanwhile, yesterday said it would assist an overseas Filipino workers facing capital punishment in Malaysia.

Labor Secretary Patricia Santo Tomas said she learned from the Philippine Overseas Labor Office in Kuala Lumpur that only an OFW, were facing the death penalty out of 23 in January by the militant group Migrante International.

The DOLE chief said two of the cases were on appeal while the other four were subject to appeal.

DOLE did not name the workers or give details of their cases. Migrante said the Filipinos were facing the death penalty for drug and human trafficking. With Jerome Aning

DOLE: 38 strikes averted in January

By Blandie S. Rivera

THE COUNTRY has remained strike-free this year after the Department of Labor and Employment succeeded in settling 38 labor disputes in January.

Labor Undersecretary Manuel Imson said the averted strikes resulted to some P7 million in monetary benefits for 722 workers who would have otherwise been affected by the work stoppages.

Another 264 workers were granted a total of P10 million in separation pay Imson said, citing a report from the National Conciliation and Mediation Board (NCMB).

11 percent fewer

There were 32 fewer than filed notices of strike/lockout with the NCMB in January, or 11 percent lower than the 36 cases during the same period last year.

The number of workers covered by the notices of strike was also lower last month at 4,313 compared to 5,366 in January 2004.

Settlements

The NCMB also settled 38 strikes and lockouts including those pending at the beginning of the month.

"The settlements prevented the escalation of the labor disputes that could have led to strikes and lockouts in the areas," Imson said in a statement.

Collective bargaining

Forty-one preventive mediation cases were settled this year, resulting in the facilitation of P1.9 million in Collective Bargaining Agreement packages that benefited 316 workers. Also, 264 workers received a total of P10 million in separation pay benefits.

While the DOLE succeeded in preventing strikes and lockouts, Imson noted that the settlement of strikes took a little longer this year, reporting an average of 49 working days.

Women, kids' law to get proper airing

By Nelson T. Flores

THE DEPARTMENT of Interior and Local Government has launched a campaign aimed at increasing awareness of the existence of laws against violence on women and children.

Under the project, launched recently at the Manila Hotel, the DILG said the Lupong tagapamayapa will conduct an information campaign on the provisions and on the social impact of violence against children and women.

"Our aim to heighten people's awareness on the existence of Republic Act No. 9262 and the available services provided by the government to the victims of violence," said Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes.

Reyes said the campaign also hoped to strengthen the partnership between the national and local governments in fighting violence against women and children.

Lupo president Jaime Mary Lim said they would strike turn of barangay leaders and councilors would undergo seminars, noting that many were still ignorant about the law against violence on women and children.

Family reunion turns into a funeral wake

By Marlon Ramos
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna—The text message, Lt. Col. Dennis Villanueva's last to his wife, said: "Thesis after midnight—three mosques for my day (I can't even). We're under attack here."

Villanueva was supposed to go on leave last week to join his family on a reunion at his wife's (Jessie) in Bel-Air's Villa Josefa.

But duty did not endear with Moro leader Nur Misuari's guerrillas.

Some time after the colonel punched out his message to his wife Evangeline, a rebel sniper shot Villanueva near him and his men on Jolo Island. Wounded, Villanueva later died from loss of blood, the highest ranking officer to die in more years in fighting in the rebels.

The long-awaited reunion had become a funeral wake.

Villanueva's widow Sen. Isabel Mendoza, and the colonel's immediate family was apprised by the death.

It took him enough more last what made it easy harder to accept was that Villanueva "died just because there was no available blood for him," Mendoza told the Inquirer.

Evangeline was with the officer's father-in-law Judge Rogelio Villanueva, on Thursday, when they received a text message intimating that he (he) had been wounded in a gunfight.

"My wife really took it good news," Mendoza said. "In fact, we were talking each other why did it have to be him rather than we so many officers there with big bellies?" she said.

Air Force gives aide

Air Force spokesperson Lt. Col. Beatriz Padilla said helicopters were flying on a non-stop effort they received in order to evacuate Villanueva and other wounded soldiers.

"We understand Mrs. Villanueva and how she feels ... But it is not true that we were not able to respond to the call to immediately evacuate her husband," Padilla said.

"Within five minutes of the call, we were able to send the helicopter to get all the wounded soldiers, including Lt. Col. Villanueva," Padilla said.

"Today, we continue to ferry wounded soldiers, and support the ground troops," he said.

PHOTO BY Mindanao Bureau

Sulu death toll rises to 70

From page A1

assistant Sheen, new commander of the 32nd Infantry Battalion. Sheen had just taken over from Lt. Col. Dennis Villanueva, who was killed in a mortar attack last week.

Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Alfredo Benjamin said casualties were also growing among the insurgents, described as loyal followers of detained Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) leader Nur Misuari.

Benjamin said local officials had told the military that Misuari guerrilla leaders ambushed three commanders, one of them the younger brother of Malik, whom he did not identify.

The two others were Kumander Asnap of Sitak Town and Tukyo Jalaon of Sanlun.

Last stand

"Malik is taking a firm and final stand. We are condemning our strong resolve to finish this," Benjamin said.

He said more troops were being dropped to Malik's group near Bliss-mukmuk.

Brig. Gen. Agustin Ibrao-ito, chief of Joint Task Force Comet, said the MNLF garrison in the Bliss-mukmuk complex in Indanan and Maimbung towns were manning the military's offensive.

"The momentum is strong as in the process no stalls casualties," Ibrao-ito said.

He said soldiers and rebels "are now on a shooting distance."

"Our soldiers would have their doors. They are very close to each other's location," he said.

Benjamin described the situation as "very fluid."

"We have 100 to 200 evacuees still held the lines," the Southcom chief said. "We still continue to pound their positions until they are finally neutralized."

Causes of fighting

Benjamin added: "Misuari's groups have no support from the majority of the populace and we are happy that the local government in Jolo has pledged support behind the AFP operations."

The Misuari fighting with the Ebrao-mukmuk complex were triggered by the alleged killing by the Misuari of civilians, including a teenage boy, during an operation against the Abu Sayyaf bandits earlier this month.

The military death toll of 70 included some who were killed in an operation on Feb. 1.

A TRUCK carrying fresh kopi rushes to the town center in Jolo. The government soldiers are under a ceasefire to get food to residents who are trapped in the Habian Malik (inset), rebel in a 2000 photo

Military estimates put the number of guerrillas wounded at 70 to 130.

Benjamin identified one of those wounded as "Rebelde Malik Hadan." He did not clearly whether he was referring to MNLF leader Habier Malik or the son another man.

The renewed clashes broke out as about 100 more soldiers landed at the Jolo wharf yesterday as part of the military building.

Six planes dead

Government forces suffered their worst losses in fighting around Dr Bliss-mukmuk complex, according to Benjamin.

Army report identified some of the wounded as 1st Lt. Ramon Lorenzo and 2nd Lt. Arnold Ferrer, both of the 32nd Infantry Battalion, and 1st Lt. Romeo Galvan of the 11th Light Armor Co.

On Saturday, military officials had said the rescues were unbinding and that the MNLF garrison were divided with shooting, leaving one out of food and ammunition.

But cases of satellite phones to Jolo said they had not been getting any supply since three days ago.

Officials also said earlier that Malik's group was communicating with other leaders through mobile phones and that the government was trying to cut the links.

Ibrahim Bin, navy commodore and chairman on accreditation by the staff, the alleged Abu-based leaders rebels the military said soldiers had killed in a raid in Barangay on Feb. 1 were all civilians.

"One of those killed was a councilor of Barangay Pompol in Maimbung," Tahajuddin said.

He said the other slain "civilians" were Datu Pedrosa, his wife Phaidula and their 14-year-old son Akbar. The couple's 6-year-old son, Sayang, was wounded.

Shot by a woman

The death of the councilor and his family fueled the current violence, he said.

Malik, in an earlier statement, said the "massacre" was only one example of abuses committed by the military in Sulu.

Benjamin said soldiers from the 32nd IB were conducting an operation in the area and knocking "on the door of a house there."

"When two of our soldiers opened the door, a woman shot them. A firefight ensued," he said.

Sulu Rep. Hussin Amin vowed the military's evasion and urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to focus on investigating body.

Maintaining said yesterday it was still not considering calling a halt to the Jolo operations, but that it had ordered the military to reduce "collateral damage" and "minimize casualties among the civilian population."

"While calls for a ceasefire are welcome, it is not that easy to implement," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a radio interview.

Benjamin added: "Justice has to be served first ... My concern allow justice elements to satisfy truth away from what they have done. That will only invite more terrorism and crime."

He said the decision to stop fighting was in the hands of officers on the ground. Report's from John L. Mapalo, Ed Gonzalez and Joselly Rocillo, PDI Abubakar Bantuas, Cherylin V. Esguerra and Juliet Labog-Javellana in Manila; and Inquirer news

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Fiesta revelry couldn't . . .

From page A1

flag-draped coffin of her 23-year-old son and says.

On top of the bed lay a stuffed Mickey cop.

"He roamed in [with] his siblings," Cavanaya's father Virgilio said to be out in tears, glancing at his son.

On the street below, horses pulling carriages lined one another, their hooves clip-clopping on the pavement, as the fiesta revelers laughed, danced and roared.

They were among the people Cavanaya had died for.

Cavanaya was one of 15 soldiers of the 5th Infantry Battalion who were ambushed and killed by Moro rebels in Sulukal, Jolo, on Feb. 7.

Fatal wounds

Twelve other soldiers were reckless in the ... in Chabay before Cavanaya was to reach Libertad.

Virgilio said his son was hit twice in the ... and once in the forehead.

A computer programming graduate, Cavanaya worked as a factory but left it to join the Marines to be could help his family financially.

As a soldier, he would send P4,000 a month—without fail—to his sisters Daisy, a college graduate, and Noel Annie, a high school graduate, to help them with their school expenses, Virgilio said.

Honors for the heroes

"I think he also liked being a soldier. He wouldn't have joined the Marines if he didn't want to become one," said Virgilio, a security driver in Amoranto, Cavite.

The remains of Cavanaya and nine of the nine soldiers were airlifted to Villamor Air Base on Saturday. Motors carried the 10 at the Headquarters Special Station on 9 a.m. today. (See list on this page.)

Helping the bereaved

Maj. Gen. Ely S. Tagud, deputy for Guimaras had the board women being left of marking men that all the awards of the bereaved families were extended to of the funeral rites.

De Guzman told the Inquirer that the Armed Forces would shoulder all the funeral expenses. De Guzman would mass, under a memorandum of agreement with companies.

The military has also given each family P40,000 as "initial contribution" and is lining up other financial benefits.

A beautiful cadet

"It is a big help to our family," Lt. Reynaldo Rodelo's brother Sonia said, pondering over how much it would cost her and her husband Jose. It so long their eldest son back home to Aklan.

10 fallen soldiers

THE REMAINS of 10 of the seven Marine and seven soldiers who died in the fighting on Jolo were airlifted to Villamor Air Base on Saturday.

Met by a team of Marine and Air Force officials, the slain soldiers were: **1st Lt. Reynaldo Rodelo**, company commander; **Sergeants Ephrin Lomoro** and **Arnel Pareto**; **Cpl. Ronnie Rodriguez**; **Privates First Class Delfin Asoad, Lednel Pesoras** and **Dominga Sumanting**; and **Privates Jun Jun Quejada, Rasher Sumarrocon** and **Jerry Cuasay**.

Bonia decided to use the P40,000 to buy her 20-year-old son a beautiful white casket.

"There's a P15,000 ceiling for the casket, but we bought him something more. It cost him for all his sacrifices for us," Bonia said.

Brother a soldier, too

At a first lieutenant, Rodelo earned a basic pay of P20,000, which helped send his four siblings to school. A younger brother, Jesus, is now a second lieutenant assigned in Basa, Bataan.

Cpl. Ronnie Rodriguez, 25, earned less than Rodelo but made it a point to send his parents, Maxima and Andres, P5,000 each monthly.

He had also been providing for his common-law wife Catherine and year-old son RJ.

Andres, a former Dole fieldman, Cavite, said his son had always wanted to become a soldier.

'Don't look at his face'

"He often played with guns and fought off imaginary monsters," he said, smiling at the memory.

Soldiering became Rodriguez's way of life because his parents could not send him to college.

Love and joint etched on her chest, Maxima held on to her son's framed picture. She and her husband had been told not to look at his remains because his face had been blown off.

Last act of love

"When we learned that our soldier's son had succumbed, we immediately had his small Christian ordained and framed," said Evelyn's sister Lolita.

One of Maxima's regrets is that little RJ would never get to know his father.

She said her husband wants their son's funeral to be over few weeks, however, seeing already that he. "We would like to take care of them," she said.

It is the lesson Rodriguez's that they can do for a son who gave up his life as a land act of love.

The WORLD

Edna Lorraine B. Gonzalez

Valentine's Day dates back to erotic fest

By Jo Biddle

PARIS—Despite its increasing commercialization, Valentine's Day supposedly stretches back to Roman times named after a saint martyred for defying the emperor and marrying couples in secret.

But the exact origins of the day have been lost in the mists of time, as has the true identity of Saint Valentine.

The most popular legend says that Saint Valentine defied Emperor Claudius II of Rome, who had banned all marriages and engagements within the city because he believed love-struck men were failing to join his legions.

Eventually Saint Valentine was caught and sentenced to be beaten to death and decapitated on Feb. 14, around 270 AD.

The day fell around the time of February which were already in Roman times a festival of emotion to honor Juno Februata, the queen of Roman gods and goddesses.

During the celebration of Lupercalia, the Romans would place the names of young women in a box which would then be drawn by men seeking a partner for feasting and erotic games.

But the early Christians were a dour lot, and sought to supersede pagan Christian festivals on solemn holidays deemed too pagan and improper.

As saint-lovesick grew suluk, mixed with holidays to honor the saints, so Saint Valentine gradually became synonymous with the feast of lovers.

Even the Catholic Church seems to have trouble pinning down who Saint Valentine was.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia "at least three Saint Valentines, all of them martyrs, are mentioned in the early martyrologies under the date of Feb. 14."

It mentions the third three times, asserting: "One is described as a priest at Rome, another as bishop of Interamna (modern Terni) and these two were both believed to be entombed on the third of the three roads ... Of the third Saint Valentine, who suffered in Africa with a number of companions, nothing further is known."

Traditional words to honor the Roman Valentinus, the priest who died after defying Claudius in the year 270.

Some say he died after refusing to give up Christianity, while others favor the version that he was secretly marrying couples.

But a third version says Valentine was a physician who cured the sick and once he was arrested, his jailer brought his daughter to him in the hope of her regaining her sight.

Despite his prayers, the girl remained blind but moments before his execution, Valentine called for paper and wrote on it "from your Valentine," wrapping it around a blossom which was said to have restored the girl's vision when she unfolded it. AFP

AN APPARENTLY love-struck Syrian examines a Valentine Day gift item being sold at a Damascus hotel Feb. 13. AFP/LOUAI

China, Russia press N. Korea to return to 6-way nuke talks

BEIJING—North Korea on Monday came under increasing pressure from traditional allies China and Russia to return to multi-party talks on eliminating its nuclear weapons program.

The diplomatic offensive came as the United States said the six-nation talks were the only opportunity for the negotiations and North Korea said it would urge Beijing to use its influence with Pyongyang to bring the North back to the talks.

The outward bulletin replies on Thursday announced it possesses nuclear weapons and was dropping out of the multilateral talks, accusing the United States of planning to invade.

China as the weekend said a senior official would maintain the pressure on the North, with Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing telling US counterpart Condoleezza Rice that Beijing would keep working to jumpstart the talks.

"China will strive to make the situation develop in a positive direction so that the six-party talks could resume as soon as possible," Li was quoted by Xinhua news agency as saying in the telephone talks Saturday.

Russia, traditionally considered sympathetic to the North, issued an unusually strongly worded statement that Pyongyang would have made the "wrong choice" if it decided to quit the discussions.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said at a meeting of security experts in the German city of Munich Saturday: "If the information in question proves accurate, I would say that North Korea has made the wrong choice. I believe we should do all we can to keep that state in the treaty framework."

The statement highlighted growing US-led international pressure on the North since it claimed to have already developed nuclear weapons. AFP

Head of Iraq food program blocked audit

NEW YORK—The UN oil-for-food program chief under scrutiny for alleged corruption and mismanagement blocked a proposed audit of his office amid the controversy he was accused of soliciting lucrative oil deals from Iraq, according to investigators.

A UN auditing team said running the $64-billion scandal-hit food-for-oil program was "a high risk activity" and a priority for review. But Benon Sevan denied the internal auditors' request to take a specialized to examine his office in May 2001—as part of a wide investigation of the program are now questioning.

"I think the auditors thought they were somehow here to embarrass," Paul Volcker, who heads the independent probe, said. "Our judgment is that the main office should have been audited. And then leaves the inference that perhaps the auditors were not encouraged to do the work."

The records also leaves intact the auditors' request, a Panamanian company, African Middle East Petroleum, purchased 1 million barrels of oil, which Iraq had allocated to Sevan—one of nine allocations made between 1998 and 2002 to individuals or companies with close ties to the Iraqi regime.

Sevan, who has denied any wrongdoing, has said he received no kickbacks but expressed concern at $160,000 in cash that Sevan said he received from an agent in his native Cyprus in 1999-2003. AP

Eala draws more flak from TNT

By Jose Mesiara

ALREADY under fire from a Quezon City court, Philippine Basketball Association Commissioner Noli Eala found himself getting more flak from Talk 'N Text yesterday for being "unfair" in handling the Asi Taulava issue.

TNT division governor Al Panlilio said Eala has since been uncooperative to Talk 'N Text and has shown unwarranted hostility when he keep Taulava out of the recent Asian Basketball Confederation-Philippine Cup championship series won by the Barangay Ginebra Kings over the Texans.

The vice-secretary to Eala's claim is unsupported reports that he had allegedly stated in media that he "DID" want to find a solution to the impasse over Taulava's playing rights.

"Commissioner Eala's reference to our conversation as unwarranted is not true and not appreciated. I am true with mine statement and the statement that commissioner Eala have been unfair to Talk 'N Text," Panlilio said in statement.

Panlilio continued he said Eala had initially called for 30 minutes but Friday, and an hour and half after the latter arrived from Davao.

But he said it was a private talk and not a "reconciliation" meeting as Eala had claimed. Eala was never conciliatory during their talk, Panlilio added.

"This does not speak well of his ethical and professional demeanor," Panlilio said.

Sicky Vargas, Talk 'N Text representative in the PBA board, also accused Eala of unfairness. "Many observers, the media, even, are tend to manifest to Eala but he says one thing and does another.

Vargas said Talk 'N Text had been a victim of Eala's schism. "Eala has to assume his role as a commissioner, as commissioner, and take full responsibility for his actions," he said.

Vargas maintained that TNT's decision not to field Taulava beginning in the second game of the Finals was a surprise sacrifice for the management and the team for the league and its fans.

He said it is the commissioner the team's position that Taulava is qualified to play as ruled by Judge Rogelio Pelaez of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 227.

The PBA had filed a motion for reconsideration but the appeal was turned down last week.

"While we are open to any discussion, PBA management will continue to stand on the applications of the rule of law and will not sacrifice or compromise our players' right to due process," Vargas said.

In denying the PBA appeal, Eala was given 15 days to explain why he should not be cited for contempt for refusing to allow naturalized-import entry by the PBA to fill the suspension of Taulava.

The pro league had suspended Taulava indefinitely along with five other Philippine players based on a controversial ruling that they were in fact linked their citizenship following a former committee investigation last year.

After Pilipino ruled that Taulava be reinstated, TNT fielded him in the opener of the best-of-seven series which the Phone Pals won, 89-71. But Rule forbidden of that game in favor of the Kings with the PBA board upholding the commissioner's decision to declare Taulava as an ineligible player.

With TNT deciding to keep Taulava out of the title series starting in Game 2, the Kings went on to clinch the title.

Games were Game 2, Talk 'N Text came back to take the next two games, before the Kings seized the next two matches to get their second straight championship crown.

Eala was told to explain why he should not be cited for contempt after the QC Regional Trial Court Branch 227 directed the appeal filed by the PBA to reinstate the judge's motion to deny.

The PBA filed counter to reconsideration after Matute ordered the league to lift the suspension of Asi Taulava and resume the contractual obligations of the Talk 'N Text center with his contract holds.

The court issued from the PBA appeal on Feb. 11 and gave Eala 10 days to answer the charges upon receiving Panlilio's order.

"We don't get to see it or copy of the decision. But as soon as we get it, we will evaluate before making our next move," Eala had said, stressing prior to sending the case to the Court of Appeals to convey possibility.

Taulava played in Game 1 of the two of seven PBA Philippine Cup Finals where the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals won, 89-71, but was immediately benched by the league in favor of the Barangay Ginebra Kings.

But the San Emigs had earlier captured the Finals Conference at the expense of Red Bull Barako.

TAULAVA shows off one of the things he does best: for Talk 'N Text. AUGUSTO

PBA set to renew ABC-5 contract

By Jose Mesiara

ANTIPOLO with 41 coverage, The Philippine Basketball Association is set to renew its television partnership with ABC-5.

Although nothing has been finalized, a PBA board of governors insider confirmed that ABC-5's contract, which expires at the end of this month, would be extended for another conference.

PBA commissioner Noli Eala declined to say anything pending the final decision of the board but he praised the network for its coverage of ABC-5.

"It has really upgraded the scripting, branding and marketing of the league," said Eala, referring to the network's coverage of the Asian Basketball Confederation-Philippine Cup won by Barangay Ginebra.

"We are working out things with our present contract and hopefully the end of the ABC-5 ties down for the PBA can continue."

EALA praises ABC-5.

Contract first crack

Although the PBA has opposed the move for other regional television networks and satellite to come in, Eala hinted that ABC-5 would certainly get the first crack.

"Everybody's welcome, but right now we have to take what's on the table, he said. "We will look into what we have at the moment with enthusiasm and openness."

Since ABC-5 took over from the MBA-BC was sealed before the Fiesta Cup last conference, marked improvements over widely seen with the coverage, that readers said this has brought to the interest to the games.

NBA-inspired coverage

In the Finals, ABC-5 introduced an PBA-inspired program by travelling more crew-style set graphics coupled with in-depth interviews never before seen in the league's coverage before.

"We are happy to see tangible what we intend to do in improving the coverage," said ABC-5 marketing services manager Elanton de la Cruz. "Hopefully, we can continue contributing to the success of the PBA in the coming conference."

League executive said Game 6 of the Finals was a smashing success as far as gate attendance, TV ratings and advertising sales are concerned.

ABC-5 sports director Steven Glass said the PBA still managed to sell 16 minutes of advertisement spots, including two minutes of airtime when the game was already in progress.

Helping correct Red Smith

BARE EYE

Ricardo Brandstad

1968 Schmeling who, together with the tournament Joe Louis had figured in an unforgettable one-sided heavyweight boxing classic, did not live to be 100 hundred. He passed away at 99 last week.

The guy earned the century mark by a point.

But it would be silly to say he did not live Full years.

Ironically, what would make Schmeling a memorable ring figure was the night he failed to beat the count in a return encounter with Louis.

The great Red Smith, a Manila visitor in 1975, had written that, in 1936, Schmeling, "the German Brit spindle of white terror, supremacy had knocked out Louis, the Brown Bombers from Detroit, in the 12th round of their first fight at the Yankee Stadium."

A golden chronicle of the Louis-Schmeling return encounter two years later, done from dugside by the great Bob Considine, forms part of Bare Eye. Red Smith's favorite sports stories.

...

We pulled back the softened Red Smith cruise from the dusty shelf in an effort to set the record straight.

Well, it's easy to believe Mr. Smith had thought he was being honest when he called Schmeling "the Nazi apostle of Aryan supremacy."

What would you have long enough was the fact that Schmeling was not a willing agent of dominative Hitlerism.

In fact, Time Magazine, in its Milestone section that week, noted that Schmeling, "the first European to win the world title in 1930," "BECAME A PUBLICITY VICTIM OF NAZI HYPE" as the year's leading up to World War II."

Time centered its defense of Schmeling against public lobbying with the heavyweight boxing division.

But, to retrace the boiled details of those memorable return bout at Yankee Stadium on June 22, 1936, let's call in Mr. Considine (with the "other shock of watching Louis knock out Schmeling").

...

"It was a shocking thing, that knockout —short, chop, merciless, complete. Louis was like that.

"He won a big lean rapper opening, tightened and enlightened through months of training until he was one perpetual package of coiled venom.

"Schmeling (if I'm saying, He had it with a whooping right hand punch in the first minutes of the fight—and the opening terminated with frantic, and dead) boxer with our brains going of accuracy, and footwork until, perplexed, was entering him. Maxwell Samuels, the last white candidates of the ring fights. And Schmeling was in the path of them, a mere caught and manager in the whirling claw of a mad lovesick machine."

Some dead cops editors could todays accuse Mr. Considine of having screamed in rooms in his classic ring indictment.

But what needs thorough editing here is the mangling Schmeling had suffered in the hands of Red Smith when he called the great Germ man athlete a Hitler spook.

...

Here's Time 1936. 14, 2005) on Schmeling: "He was no use to Hitler as an Aryan superhero: Schmeling, whose loss in a rematch with Louis became emblematic of the roaring struggle with Germany, refused to join the Nazi Party and after the war, he is now disclosed he had saved two Jews from death in the Kristallnacht violence of 1938. A quiet philanthropist, he befriended Louis later in life."

Hope that helps the books most honest memories of Max Schmeling.

Anyway, we had heard all that, as like Schmeling Louis died penniless.

In the end, it was the Brown Bombers who had to absorb a severe knockout.

Time had a defining conclusion to its defense of the sojourn Germans.

It reported that Schmeling paid for "the unprecedented Yankee champ's 1941 funeral."

...

CORRIGENDUM: Teddy BG Boyzoos next to non-lawyer subtle we were on counter-gamey knee. He wanted to elevate that case of Filipino Cotto-ine Garcia, but was not really allowed right boxing champion. "It was reported that contro-versial Marcel Thil" will be inducted to the International Boxing Hall of Fame alongside Lope "Flyin' Bantam" Jr. Jones, while the more be-mixing Gotti Gorilla Foo recommended Thil. Gotti Gorilla Foo recommended Thil. Gotti Gorilla Foo recommended Thil.

Hamas vows to maintain truce, hold off immediate retaliation

CAIRO – Hamas yesterday reiterated its pledge to maintain a de facto truce and, in a major policy change, not to retaliate immediately for any Israeli violence while it sought Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas' ouster with Israel.

"Formal position regarding calm will continue unchanged and Israel will bear responsibility for any new violations or aggression," Ismail Haniyeh, a senior member of the militant group, told Reuters after talks with Abbas.

But in a new series of meeting with Abbas, Mahmoud al-Zahar, another Hamas leader, said the group would consult with the Palestinian authority before responding to Israeli military action that fell short of "massive and unconventional."

The arrangement appeared to be aimed at preventing the kind of eruption of violence that occurred on Thursday when Hamas and the Islamic Jihad group launched mortar and rocket barrages at Israeli settlements in the Gaza after troops killed a Palestinian.

Abbas told Hamas and the Islamic Jihad group, which also agreed to the deal, that he had been unable to persuade Israel to allow Hamas to respond on its own to any Israeli violations," a Palestinian official said.

Both groups which had largely abided by a de facto truce over the past several weeks, said they needed more consultations before reaching a final decision on the ceasefire to be brokered with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in a summit on Tuesday.

Inching violence to control to Abbas' hopes of reviving a US-backed peace "road map" that charts mutual steps toward the creation of a Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel. – Reuters

French losing battle vs English

PARIS – The dominance of English as the world's largest business continues to grow with the number of people studying French declining every year, language students have ordered waiters garçon, and at a flick trick show this week said, many with regret.

The predominance of English on the Internet, the continuance of learning basic English and the perception that English is "cool" – Darko it, large part to popular music and films – means French is becoming more and more restricted to older generations and the upper classes of many countries where it used to be the second language of choice in schools, they said.

"Some among us see a sort of naivety in this. But personally I side with a campaign in the British press against our deficit in learning languages," John Hopkins, a British sales readers French at Oxford Texas College, told AFP at the Francophone show in southern Paris.

In Britain, she said, much of the problem lies with a recent government decision to make a second language optional for pupils 14 years and older.

She pointed to a study which showed that, across British schools, 72 percent registered a decline in the number of students learning French. German studies declined 6.70 percent of the schools, while Spanish declined by just 90 percent. AFP

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Wildcats rip USP, face Lancers next

[illegible]
by its—University of San Jose-Recoletos
vs the tie-breaker set)
6 p.m.—University of Mindanao
vs University of Visayas

By Francis Dichoso

CEBU CITY—The University of Mindanao Wildcats learned on mounting comic hexagon Asian and a suffocating defense to hatch out a 93-74 triumph over the University of Southern Philippines Panthers yesterday in the Championship Cup of the Cebu Collegiate Inter.

Jimmi, a prized find from a well-funded grassroots program, dumped 15 of his 25 points in the second half as the Wildcats came out of a 12-point third-quarter hole to advance in this UB NCAA-style tournament against Cebu heavyweight University of the Visayas.

"We adjusted our zone defense in the second half so they would not take open shots," said Wildcats coach Elard Jonelle Filipino.

In the second game, Orville Saludsod scored 21 points to lead five players in double figures—including three in the 20's—as the University of Cebu Webmasters devastated the Silay Negros College Wizard cage, 100-81.

The Panthers led by just six at the half but pushed away in the third period by unloading a classic ball-court press and turning to Saludsod on offense to take an 82-61 edge going into the last quarter.

Ginel Ortigosa and Kenneth Jovenero added 20 each for UC, which advances to the next round against the seeded University of San Jose-Recoletos Jaguars.

The Wildcats abandoned their usually effective 2-3 zone and threw a 1-3-1 defense after the Panthers had taken a 54-42 spread early in the third period.

The switch proved fruitful as UM, the Davao collegiate circuit champion, forced USP to rest its offense through the 6-foot-9 Jimmi, whose lumbering presence in the middle stymied the Panthers to end.

Before the defensive change, the Wildcats fell prey to a well-oiled Panthers offense that resulted in crisp drop passes to the baseline for penetrating shots.

"It took a while for us to see what they [Panthers] could do," Jimmi said.

When they did figure it out, the Wildcats took charge, holding the Panthers scoreless in a three-minute stretch in the third period to take a 67-61 lead entering the final quarter.

The Wildcats then turned to Jimmi at every opportunity, feasting on short stabs and executing a soft touch from the corner. Fenan boomed 8 for 10 as 83-63 lead.

The Wildcats even stretched their lead to 92-72.

But USP, which trailed by 13 at the end of the first period as it struggled to get a feel of the court, cannot go on another slow start against the seeded UV Green Lancers, who are led by Philippine Basketball League standout JB Cultura.

UV earned an automatic bye after winning the Cebu Schools Athletic Foundation Inc. title over University of San Jose-Recoletos, which got the other outright seed.

The winners of tomorrow's matches fly to Manila to join the main bracket of the tournament featuring the top collegiate schools in the country.

Thursday
First Game
UM (93)—Jimmi 25, Jovenero 20, Delos 14, Acedo 11, Medalla 5, Rivedo 6, Tabo 2, Catampong 2, Nebrancia 2, Lorenzo 2, Gaco [illegible]

USP (74)—Cabanes III, Tanares 11, Rimorin II, Barbosing 8, Pardanog 8, Ortanez 9, Ramos I, Barrameda 4, Cardoza 2, Zamora 2

Quarters: 16-20, 41-41, 61-63, 93-74

THE DE LA SALLE Lady Archers whoop it up after winning the Shakeys V-League title by sweeping the UST Tigresses yesterday.

Lady Archers score V-League title sweep

By Marang R. Castillo

LA SALLE held the normally prolific Santo Tomas offense to only 55 points yesterday, fashioning out a straight-set victory to nail down the Shakey's V-League title with a 2-0 sweep of their championship series.

The Lady Archers came up with a defensive wall that kept the Tigresses at bay and won, 25-14, 25-16, 25-22, in just one hour and 16 minutes to highlight a historic season.

"The players simply did not want to lose," said assistant coach Oliver Almadro, who called the shots after Rondi de Jesus, who came down with chicken pox right after Game 1 on Thursday.

"This one is for the school and the thousands who supported us," added Almadro as the Lady Archers practically had the home court edge with La Salle students and alumni almost filling the Rizal Coliseum to the rafters.

Skipper Maureen Penetrante and Michelle Carolino took turns in hurting the Tigresses, their 33 points total just one shy of the entire UST output in the first two sets.

Carolino consistently found holes in the UST defense, towering above everyone else every time she went for a kill. She was later named the tournament Most Valuable Player over UST's Rosanne Olmoreal, who settled for the Best Attacker award.

The Tigresses, who went the league's fatal conference, were cover in 4 as they groped for focus all game long.

Olmoreal, who twisted her right ankle in Game 1, played under a lot of pain medication but was not much of a factor despite leading the Tigresses with 13 markers.

La Salle gauged up on Pimentel every time she was up front, and the 6-foot athletic monster bungled idle the very few times that she was left wide open.

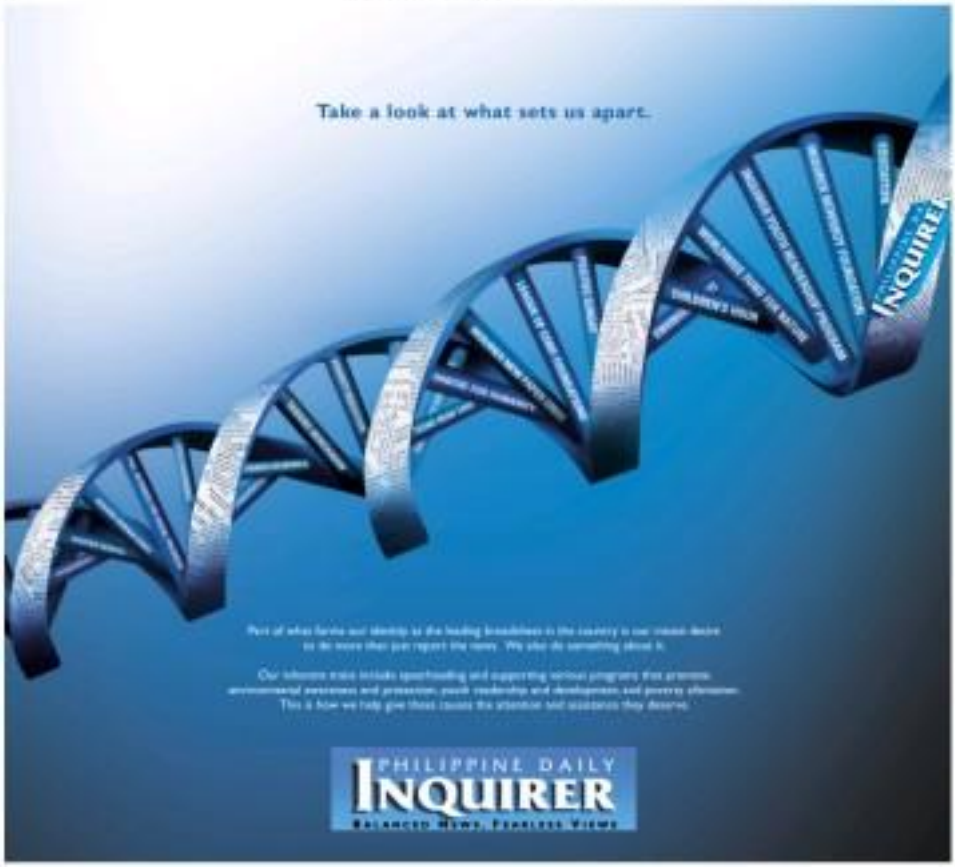
Mona Bernal and Mary Ann Bales chipped in 11 apiece for the Tigresses, who got only three points from Rule Co Yu Kong, who also played with patent both knees.

"The team has nothing to be ashamed of," said Santo Tomas coach Angel Sa Ilarde.

La Salle won a total of 11 point-off blocks and Santo Tomas added in downfall by committing 16 unforced errors.

Ali Gul, UAAP champ La Salle beat Santo Tomas in three of four meetings in this tournament. The Lady Archers' lone win all last one of 30 games dating back to July.

Letran bagged third place earlier after a 25-23, 25-21, 16-25, 25-20 decision of the Philippine Sports Commission Lady Legends.



MALARAYAT UPSET

Lina ends Jayvie's streak

LIPA CITY—In a monumental upset, former national player Lina de Guzman fired a one-under-par 71 yesterday to sweep the fancied Jayvie Agojo in the Ladies Class A crown of the Samsung Amateur Tour national grand finals at the Mt. Malarayat Golf and Country Club in Lipa, Batangas.

De Guzman played the last five holes of the Mt. Malarayat nine at one-under on two birdies, a bogey and two pars to secure a three-stroke win over the newly crowned Philippine Ladies Open champion Agojo.

The 42-year-old De Guzman, a driving range attendant at the Casablanca Golf and Country Club, wound up with a two-day aggregate of 148 after Saturday's blistering 77 that left her five shots behind the 18-year-old Agojo.

Agojo, shooting an even-par 72 in the first round, had it all for the taking and even led by six strokes De Guzman bogeyed the first hole.

But Jayvie ended back with two bogeys in the final five-hole stretch and collapsed with a seven-over 79 to wind up at 151 in the 54-hole duo sponsored by Tokyo Tokyo, Gatorade, adidas, Taylor Made, KIA by Carens Globetrekker, Pink Pasta Beauty, Coppertone Sport, Bogie-L and Philippine Airlines as the official carrier. Malaysian Inn is the official hotel. Killer-Bee, Jam 88.3, Wave 89.1, Magic 89.9, 99.5 RT and 103.5 Hitlo are media partners.

Cyna Bedrijano chipped Bubbles Sorio on the second extra hole of a sudden-death playoff for the Class B plum while Mi Sung Yoon wound up with her best finish of the season at third.

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DRIVING range attendant Lina de Guzman (left) nooks off newly-crowned RP Ladies Open champ Jayvie Agojo in the last five holes of the Mt. Malarayat nine with a one-under card. ROMEO

Morales: It will be Pacquiao's left against my right

IT WILL be A "battle of styles."

Morales was told. "If Bubble" Morales declared this yesterday even as he exuded confidence he has perfected a plan to beat Filipino hero Manny Pacquiao on March 19 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

"I trust the power of my fists. Pacquiao is a boxer of great power, but I can also counter him. I have definitely a fight plan and hope to obtain victory," said Morales in an interview with Mexican boxing writer Vincente Castellanos.

Morales, who is assisting at the high-altitude Hotel Montemolin, advised he has already studied fight tapes of Pacquiao and concludes that the Filipino fighter is a very dangerous opponent.

"I am going to look for opening to take advantage of his style. This is going to be a clash of his left hand against my right hand. I hope that it is my fist that prevails in the end," Morales added.

Pacquiao is a southpaw while Morales is a right-hander. They will be fighting in the 130-lb junior lightweight category.

"The world knows about his tremendous

MORALES: Confident

victories by knockout but still, so I have observed that his defeats have been by knockout. Pacquiao is a boxer who fights to knock out or be knocked out. It is possible that he can be beaten, even by account of his stamina," he said.

After taking care of Pacquiao, Morales said he would move up in weight and fight in the 135-lb (lightweight) category in the next two years or more.

Aside from his own career, Morales said he is busy and satisfied with the conditions of his contract with Top Rank promoters Bob Arum.

Morales is the possessor of such honors as Jose Sarcenio Aguilera, Jorge "Travieso" Arce, "Barrio" Meza, Manuel "Mejia, "Bebe" Morales, Jackie Nava, and many more.

The Mexican was said he has just finished signing a contract with the North American television company Fox Sports, to make a monthly event that will be called "Aztec Soldiers."

Also in Morales' immediate plan is marriage to long-time girlfriend Andrea Mora.

Isidro L. Lagumbay, Contributor

St. Stephen, Xavier title clash on

DEFENDING champion St. Stephen's High School and Xavier School cast their best-of-three championship series for the 29th Hitachi-Metro Manila "Boys' Line Basketball League title today at the Ateneo de Manila Gym.

Today's first game is at 9 a.m.

St. Stephen's scored an overpowering 86-66 victory over host Ateneo Blue Chip College, 88-66, while Xavier bounced back in the final quarter to turn back EPHS High School, 79-72, to arrange another title showdown in the matches sponsored by Hitachi and supported by Asia1, Hang Ten, Healthy Options and Jovino Paints.

Rich Co and Cliff Spanish forged 38 St. Stephen's finals entry with double-double performances.

Co tallied a game-high 22 points on top of 18 rebounds while Aparente added 21 points and 16 boards.

St. Stephen held its rival to just seven points in the second period to pull away, 50-29.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

No. 2

A DAY after the Bureau of Customs celebrated its 103rd anniversary with a rare presidential visit, the Office of the Ombudsman marked the occasion with a more appropriate rite of passage: It suspended the agency's second highest-ranking official.

Deputy Customs Commissioner Reynaldo S. Nicolas was placed on preventive suspension for six months after two of his relatives and nine of his neighbors confirmed reports of his ill-gotten wealth. They offered evidence that Nicolas, a bar topnotcher in 1985, had used "dummies" to hide his considerable assets.

EDITORIAL

Nicolas has vigorously protested his innocence, telling the Inquirer that he was merely a victim of intrigue by some of the country's biggest smugglers. "Let me make myself clear that the suspension will not weaken my resolve to go after all those big-time smugglers to the bottom."

But the suspension order signed by Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo seems to be based on rock-solid evidence. His sister-in-law and a nephew of his wife submitted separate affidavits attesting to Nicolas' wealth and accused the Customs official of forcing his mother-in-law, Gloria F. Lorenzo, to front as the owner of a piece of real estate in posh Ayala Alabang Village in Muntinlupa City.

More damaging still, Asuncion Lim, his neighbor on Acacia Drive, also in Ayala Alabang, admitted in another sworn statement that she had agreed to accept the ownership of the Acacia Drive property some time ago when Nicolas' wife, Yolanda, "resolutely approached" her to make the request. At that time, Nicolas and other government officials were feeling the heat of the Arroyo administration's lifestyle check.

If the Acacia Drive property is indeed hers, Lim said, she would sell it and donate the proceeds to the victims of last year's floods and landslides.

The Ombudsman's investigators also found that Nicolas owned a total of 11 vehicles worth P17.4 million. All told, Nicolas was found to have total assets amounting to P48.92 million, or translated on a monthly salary of not more than P35,000. (Neither he nor his wife declared any business interest in his Statement of Assets and Liabilities.) He now faces charges of "dishonesty, grave misconduct, and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service."

If Nicolas is indeed the nemesis of "big-time smuggler," we trust that he will use the next six months to collect solid proof not only of his innocence but also of the smuggling that is said to bedevil the agency. His work is cut out for him.

But already there are valuable lessons to learn from his suspension.

First, the lifestyle check is truly a potent weapon in the war on corruption. Again, we note that it can be abused (we shudder to think what would have happened if the weapon had been in use during the term of the previous Ombudsman) or misused (say, as a headline-begging substitute for the hard, slogging work of effective litigation). But in combination with other weapons in the anti-corruption arsenal, it makes for an effective first salvo.

Second, citizen participation remains the essential element in the anti-corruption mix. We will never rid ourselves of the culture of corruption that corrodes our very way of life if we demand the guilty verdict not knowing but evidence or make excuses for the guilty we are close to. Indeed, and in too many cases, we know the malfeasance (or, in another sense, the glamorous) details of a friend or a relative's corruption better than any investigators. If we have our own thought of cooperating in the anti-corruption campaign, should we be surprised that corruption continues to thrive?

Third, an effective anti-corruption campaign recognizes that the fruits of justice may be plucked even with useless hands. It is important to remember that Lim agreed to serve as Nicolas' dummy—perhaps, out of sheer neighborliness—but only turned against him when a bystander deal with him seemed toast. It is the responsibility of officials, such as the Ombudsman, to forge a reputation that will attract those with lesser culpability to testify against those with more. Naturally, the Ombudsman and like officials must learn to weigh the testimony, separating the grain of evidence from the chaff of motive.

Despite its record collection, the Bureau of Customs continues to suffer from pervasive corruption. Shock therapy may be the answer. If it is, suspending the agency's Deputy Commissioners, on the basis of solid evidence, is the right first dose.

No such thing as Valentine's Day bonus in budget

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

FILIPINOS are in non-rebellious mood for the moment as rising anti-government fees, most particularly in the value-added tax. The government's excuse for the increase is the budget deficit and the foreign debt. The government needs funds to pay for them. Where else to source them but from the taxpayers?

But at the same time that the hungry government is squeezing the taxpayers, it throws away P1.6 billion in Low-rolled Valentine's Day bonus to the 1.2 million government employees. More much of hard-earned money will such worker have to part to fund the P1.6 billion?

The ostensible cut of all is that the money is going to a particularly ungrateful bunch of people. Instead of being grateful for the bonus (which private employees will not get), the government employees described the bonus because it was "too small." President Macapagal-Arroyo had initially announced that the government can afford to give only a P1,000 bonus for each state employee. The benefits-minded workers and the President who claims to love them an innate feeling of being unloved and a friendly object of being unpopular, immediately raised the amount to P3,000 rupees. Not unlike a super-duddy eager to please his mistress. The President is losing popularity with leaders. But that is still not good enough for the leaches. They want P5,000 each because that's what they received last year.

Last year we didn't have the flood crisis. This year we are scraping the bottom of the barrel. This year, the salaries in many government offices are not released because we are running dry. Last year, administration projects have been halted...because of lack of funds. This year, the President is pushing Congress to pass a number of tax measures to squeeze more money out of the people. But the government employees, those with multi-media jobs, mostly of women, but silhouettes and sidelines, want more, more, more—not unlike the giant expecting the goose to lay more golden eggs until it died.

Mobilizing says the bonus will come from the "savings" if government offices. If they have savings, then can only mean that their appropriations were more than enough and that Congress should save millions that budget to cut costs and give the taxpayers a break. And the savings should go back to the Treasury, instead of being spent. It is no secret that the departments draw their budgets on that when Congress cuts them, more than enough would be left. It is also no secret that when the fiscal year closes to an end, most offices spend their remaining budget on such useless and wasteful expenses as seminars in luxurious places so that Congress will cut out their proposed budgets for the next year.

I would like to know whether the President got the authority to spend P6.6 billion for a fraudulent flag bonus. The President and the government owners cannot spend any money unless it is appropriated by Congress. I doubted last year's General Appropriations Act and I could not find any allocation for a "discretionary" fund for them. So, the taxpayers, cannot tell the press-authorized. Today it is a Valentine's Day bonus, tomorrow it could be an All Saints' Day bonus, or a Holy Week bonus, or even a birthday bonus for each and every state employee. The possibilities are limitless. But being in congressional have the imagination to source money for the appropriations, in the same way that they have intended various names for the pork barrel.

Already, the President is brazen enough to spend government funds not authorized by any appropriations act. The Commission on Audit (COA) should be just out of the Presidency except to put names of an appropriation by law" (Article IX, Section 29 [1]). But there is no appropriation for a Valentine's Day bonus.

This is a culpable violation of the Constitution (see Article IX, Section 2[1], for which the President can be impeached.

But, of course, President Macapagal-Arroyo is used to violations of the Constitution and not being made to account for it. Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago recently filed a petition in the Supreme Court asking that the President be declared to have resigned because of her "betrayal of public trust" when she lied to the people during the campaign period that she would not run for President in the May 2004 elections. Instead, she ran and won. Her lie was a violation of the Constitution. But the Supreme Court has not even bothered to act on the petition.

Besides the lies and presidential election, Pres. Arroyo said: "The President illegally used the trust funds raised through the Road Users' Tax and of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) for her own purposes. P14 billion of the Road Users' Tax was transferred to the land transportation projects of project Edsaka Puno, Alagang Hotta." She also transferred P4 billion of OWWA funds to PhilHealth's supervisory. No wonder the poor to have access to public health services."

"While the objectives might have been good, it was still wrong for the President to have done so," Pimentel said, considering that the OWWA and Road Users' funds are taxes funds that cannot be used for any purpose other than that specified in the law that created them.

Worse, the obvious reason for these illegal disbursements was to buy votes.

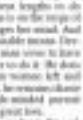
Pimentel also charged that the President won it legally authorizing the payment—without congressional authority—of some $60 million, or P3.762 billion, for the purchase of an unarmed and even an unsafe. Now she is going to violate the Constitution again each the Valentine's Day bonus.

Don't forget, make your valentine happy tonight by taking her to the after-dinner concert at the Feast Days on 7th Kalaw Street in the Tourist Belt in Manila. Nancy Cañiga, Eugene Tiñana, Emil Sitoy, Marie Rañon, and Juan Rodrigo, plus other surprise guests, will serenade you with love songs.

Best of all, admission is free, especially for journalists and Sanzaberg Florist members.

Six

THERE'S THE RUB



Conrado de Quiros

But I digress. In "Love in the Time of Cholera" (as far as I can recall, I read it years ago), a young man who considers himself a poet falls in love with the daughter of a lowly rich man, woos her, goes to great lengths to do things for her, and just to stay in the range of wedding bells for him, she changes her mind. And marries a man of more reasonable means. Devastated but resolute, young man vows to love her if he was to wait forever to do it. He does wait, building in the interim various left and right, but they do not count, he remains closer in his mind, waits his single-minded pursuit of—or waiting for—his one great love.

You get several scholars he gets her in the end. I can want to draw the reader's attention to the part where the young man falls in love for the first time. He is nineteen hardly, and the symptoms he exhibits are a mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous: He is feverish and delusional, unable to sleep, unable to eat, watching and vomiting all the time. It is all his feverish mother can do to see him through his delirious torments. It takes genius to write about this with poetry and humor at the same time. Shrapnel does it, in spades.

"The Unbearable Lightness of Being" is a famous love triangle" to use the title of a song that became popular in the '90s. Milan Kundera wrote the. I can understand his even wrestle. It's his compassion and sureness, his love-hate relationship with the sensuality we enjoy.

The triangle consists of Tereza, who comes from a small village surrounding serious ironical and who longs for depth and seriousness; Sabina, the painter, who comes from the plodding jungles of political ambiance and longs for the soaring radiance of art; and Franz, the Swiss who returns to Prague after the Russian invasion, hoping to do something for his country and ends up being "reminded" into acceptance of Sabina's ways. The sweep, of course, explores these interrelations, in particular, as the blurb suggests, the many facets of weight and lightness, to indeed their paradoxical meanings or shades of being. Weight can alleviate very light, and lightness can often be very heavy.

Tereza, for instance, we see the couple Tereza and Tereza Talitsina at the moment entered, toward the end of the book, keeping watch over their dying dog. Here is that for a truly iconic, and dazzling, play on the many shades of light and heaviness?

The rest can also be said. I have to wait for the movie, it's been made—or for book in 1984. And quite a good one it is, too. Like all great movies based on books, this one doesn't rely faithfully on the original but goes on to create its own world while retaining the original's spirit and energy. It demands to be judged by its own terms and not by literary ones. The movie stars Daniel Day-Lewis, Juliette Binoche, and Lena Olin, and was directed by Philip Kaufman.

Olin is one hell of a sexy lubrick in this movie. She plays the role of Sabina, a kind of embodiment of the unbearable physical-spiritual, sensual-substantial, light-heavy. Lightness can often truly crush you with its unbearable-ness. You want the gripping visuals and the stunning involving, watch the movie. You want the sumptuous of language and the even more sumptuous of thought, read the book. You can't have either way. You can decide if you do both.

Annabella Sciorra looks irresistible and unresistible. She is a who in one "The God of Small Things," a brilliant first novel, or even in giving a debut in "Cutch-22." But she never seemed so having the same problems as Bridie, who was unable to write a second novel until well after a decade. How the hell do you top your first opus?

But I hear that for some men.

(To be concluded)

Coping with tragedy

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cassayan

On TIME—traditional day of lovers, perhaps it's fitting to read, not the lists of sweethearts but the list of patient-learning to cope with the loss of a child. It's the story of Sister Speaker Jose de Venecia and his wife Gina have struggled to cope with the loss of their 16-year-old daughter EC—a joint confirmation by the heartfelt way she suffered and died at the age of 16 that she was a special child, and their helplessness in preventing it. Now the de Venecias are pushing against fears in an inspiring story of true day of lovers, and for others related by tragedy.

I landed three years after their unfortunate loss to normal, the universe in Gina's face was gone and she had put on some weight again. JDV looked a bit wan and was being chased for a replacement as if he needed more enough than ever big problem to cope.

Nearly two months after that tragedy Gina can already go through EC's photos, but she still cannot go to the steps in Guatemala de San Antonio where EC is taken were interred. She only went to Guatemala once after she died. She cried very quickly, as now if anything there seemed to be recovered. She hasn't been there since.

The De Venecias are coping with their grief in their cooperative way. EC is JDV's favorite child and being distant sings of the problem. Gina once told her best friend Sam that her diet was "excessive" and the person she loved most. Since the tragedy, JDV has kept himself busy which may be his therapy, but he admitted that the pain of EC's loss hits him at various times and "tears may overwhelm at EC" anytime. I identified readily." He still misses him in the New Senate. Visualizing my self-control against the wall as the thoughts kept swirling that if I had gone home an hour earlier than night, maybe I would have saved my child? Or was pre-ordained that EC would die that day? The horrible, horrific scene would replay in his mind over and over—how he and son Jerry sped over to and a large mass fell just an inch before them; he

noted a second and third time to go up with Mayor Jun Abaya, but the rescue effort failed.

Gina encourages her to confront the grief: "You cannot run away from grief; you have to overcome it in your heart." But in the early weeks it was too soon for her to talk, talked about anything to join her daughter, which is a normal instinct of parents. "EC was our little Gina. In fact, she called EC "Junior Me," remembered her.

Just because she herself is his work, and looked for a constructive way to prevent the tragedy for other people. He struggled from Congress P35 million for students. Her fighting equipment for various crises and trauma. A foundation that set up the EC will be known as the EC Foundation. The Philippine General Hospital for burn patients as a starting project; it will also help struggling artists and musicians.

Gina has her own terrible replay: how she shouldn't have taken the week's assertion at face value when EC begged permission from her mom to go out that night.

The De Venecias entered into their plan to travel to Spain and London after Christmas, an event when EC was still alive. But while there, Gina was caught up, like the rest of the world, in the tsunami disaster. How could they leave there were many thousands of families whose kin was for greater comforts.

The suppose opinion can tell them through. On Christmas Day the news has after EC's death, Gen Angelo Reyes to their Manila hotel with a present: a bouquet of flowers and chocolates from Malacañang. Soon after, Sen. Manny Villar, Sen. Loi Estrada, Sen. Jamby Madrigal, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada

Smoke-filled malls

THE huge commercial establishment in our area, Robinson's Fairmall (Red Sky, cor. Cubao Expo Blvd), are hotsh-dowsh-de-luxtions and totes smoke-filled malls in the mega-hopolis.

Despite ordinances and a global trend frowning upon the practice of allowing smokers to sit comfortably and violated, bullfrogs, smoking stalkers go non-free, to the detriment of children and the unsuspecting of non-smoking shoppers.

Financially such hoods or mall blazes are made that can best be described as sandwich-shortening, rooming for shoppers a feeling of being hemispherical to mid-noire. This is particularly true in the basements and game-rooms.

Then, just outside Robinson's on Marcos Highway, commuters and passersby are encountered by the barrage of noise from "hardcore," peddlers and "what-have-you" hoomies rush out into a megaphone or microphone to rustpull such robot. (Maybe the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority can step into this? And while we're at it, shouldn't Chali Bayani Peninsula shadow those blasting, newsboy-esque hoots? Did foreign game wax recently appalled by the "gunfire" and "wild laughter" emanating from the Philippine Sports Commission's indoor firing range?)

LETTERS

Please type spending proposals on Marcos Highway.)

But our secretary's sister, please help!

—FERNANDO MARTIAL
923 Kardenolde,
Casino Green Park Village,
Cainta, Rizal

Preposterous charges

JANET Napoles' letter (PDI, 1/28/05) made unfounded and preposterous charges against Masagana Rice Industry Inc. We wonder why the writer or her channel seldom has been found on one by that name living there. Nevertheless, to set the record straight, we submit our response to Napoles' letter for the information of the public at large.

On the fictitious claim that we manipulate our billing system by "replacing old meters with new ones that run faster, thereby increasing water rates." The replacement of old meters is standard practice among water utilities. Most consumers welcome this development as it means that without the new meter, the quantity of water consumed is accurately registered, thereby saving water with the "savings" resulting from a slower water bill. In truth, we relied the fastest meters for trucks or in one of trucks, as the ones never running faster, wouldn't be because the old one was running slow. Also, pardon us for arguing actual consumption."

On Napoles's practice of inserting bags bearing with the words "under protest," most of us ignored but all bear fruit to the customer. That is highly absurd. If we unilaterally made the bill as "under protest," then we deny ourselves the opportunity to collect the rightful amount indicated in the "protested" bill.

To also claims that we replace old meters with tampered ones, and then charge them the bloated bills. This is even more illogical. It is to the interest of Masagana that we can properly functioning meters so we can accurately measure consumption and bill our customers correctly. Is

'Where's my dog?'

LAST Jan. 31, a case was filed with the Office of the Ombudsman in Quezon City, accusing the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) officials of violating Republic Act (RA) 8749 by ordering 19 families from their place of abode. As pointed out, the MMDA team not only demolished their homes, it also burned their personal belongings—utensils, clothes, school uniforms, fans, etc.

The complainants, members of the relocated families, added "abuse of animal rights," because the MMDA team killed a dog belonging to one of their children and took the body with them in a sack—people believe to be construction workers.

Fifty people interviewed can side-the office while the complaint was being filed. One small boy told a sigh, "MOMY mom na dog ate ko DIBOH where's my dog?" (TSE, Phaser Cagayan, 2/1/05).

—JENICE DE SAPET,
Urban Poor Associates,
25th Mahabas St.,
Barangay Central, Quezon City

DENR undersecretary no coddler of illegal loggers

THIS is in response to the news article titled "Low-account top DENR exec. of protecting Zambo logging ports." (PDI, 1/22/05) It reported that Gen Reinardo Ribus has secured the of protecting loggers for allowing the transport of logs harvested by timber companies in Zamboanga del Norte...from the log pond/sorting area to their respective jetpond/plants.

For the record, I am not promoting any logging company in Zamboanga del Norte or in any part of the country. I also have not violated the Sec. 8, 2004 order of the environment secretary implementing the President's instruction on suspend logging operations nationwide.

My Dec. 23, 2004 memorandum simply granted the request of our regional executive director in Region 9 to allow the transport of the subject harvested logs in order to save them from forest and salvage their economic value. It was a practical and reasonable decision made after the guidelines of the department. The memorandum, which took into consideration the municipal and environmental good and welfare, was also in sync the government's thrust of about 35 percent of the logs' value to the form of forest charges and taxes.

It was very unfortunate that the article failed to mention that the environment secretary allowed on Dec. 14, 2004 the transport of logs harvested before the suspension, except in the provinces of Aurora and Quezon.

Ribus' accusations here, therefore, are false.

—RONNIE I.D. PAZ,
undersecretary,
Department of Environment and Natural Resources,
Visayas Avenue,
Diliman, Quezon City

Plug the VAT loopholes first

AN RR 23-2005 in the value added tax would certainly put additional economic burden on Juan de la Cruz, the VAT being an indirect tax. He has that the Supreme Court, in the case of Abakada vs. Ermita (GR 168056, 01 May 05), pointed out that indirect taxes are "paid not once but but as an additional part of the cost of the market price of the commodity."

It is easy to understand why the usually outspoken business community is now issuing any issue against the proposed measure. Companies can always shift the tax burden to the ultimate consumers. More than this, they are still entitled to tax credits known as "input taxes" under our VAT system.

On the other hand, wage earners, who constitute the majority of our populace, would have to shoulder the full impact of the tax. Who cares if the prices of commodities go up as a result? After all, as the trial of the day the poor and the middle class will have no choice but to swallow the bitter pill. Businesses will suffer in the long run.

Worse, with government's admission of unchecked administrative leakages in the implementation of the VAT system, tax-evasion companies stand to gain more profits by simply pocketing the tax, thus defeating the very purpose of the tax measure. Anyway, should Congress approve the tax measure bill, the evil corporate cliff, be off the hook all together. Thus, there is sense in the proposed ban before imposing the VAT increase, government must first address the loopholes in the present VAT system.

For now, the hopes of the last hope of Juan de la Cruz sit dim to me.

—ERNEST K. ESEJANO,
jee@manila.com.ph

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ATTENTION

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You are INVITED to ATTEND the PUBLIC HEARING on the PROPOSED REVENUE REGULATION implementing

BSP Circular No. 472

(Submission of Income Tax Returns, Financial Statements and Waiver of Confidentiality of Client Information and/or an Authority of the Bank to Conduct Random Verification with the BIR as an additional requirements before granting loans or other credit accommodations)

Visit www.bir.gov.ph for the Draft of the Proposed Revenue Regulation

February 15, 2005
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
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National Training Center
BIR Compound
Agham Rd., Diliman,
Quezon City

Across the NATION

Gunmen attack Manobo village over land dispute

By Jerry B.D. Lanaire
PhilMindanao Bureau

DON CARLOS, Bukidnon—Illegallogged wood and cash crops overdue to be facilitated here to give way to an export crop.

Four tribesmen who tried to get near the heavy equipment to verify the land clearing activity were fired at, sending them to the hospital.

The massive land conversion to pineapple has no environmental impact assessment and did not pass the scrutiny of the local legislative body, according to Sangguniang Bayan member Jude Dalmada.

Said these moves not enough, armed men attacked the Manobo village at Purok 6, less than 4 km from the town proper, shortly before midnight of last Jan. 28.

Five houses were razed. These belonged to Juliano Lenar, Cyrile Dendali, Rudy Bintiganan, Rene Pepe and Alfaino Del.ona.

Food drumps was consumed at P500,000.

Before they fled, the attackers riddled two banana trees bullets, said Sam Antonillo Mahinay Sabut. They belonged to ancestral domain head Salanani Bin Hussin bin Ibrahim.

Juno Salice is a leader of the Sinaguluwang Kalugingan sa mga Manobo ng Silonding Diskaminal, a coalition of 13 indigenous people's organizations in south central Bukidnon. Salice is a member of Witness, a New York-based human rights group that arms volunteers with video cameras to document abuses.

Salice said the tribe members were able to identify some of the attackers, all armed with "long rifles," who fled on board three motorcycles. Their names had been submitted to the local police.

They allegedly belong to the group headed by Jamir Sanorio and Lina Mantanding Sarilee. Asenova and Mantanding denied that their members were armed.

Scolded

The dispersed Manobo residents are in Mayor Felix Marmano to air their grievance, but were told instead, said Sam Salice.

"Why upset in areas where Gloa (Costa) runs of Land Ownership Agreement) had been issued?" the mayor was quoted to have told the people.

The local social welfare office gave the victims some used clothing, three cans of sardines and three bundles of packs each.

Agencies Reform Undersecretary Nasser Pangandaman was set to conduct an inquiry into the seven incidents, including the research of the Cloa beneficiaries, but to failure said.

Pangandaman and lawyer Rodora Jaraganing of the Barnund Commission for Indigenous Peoples on her visited a joint memo to claim ordering the temporary suspension of land acquisition and distribution in contentious areas, such as Don Carlos.

More than 1,500 acres/hectares of the more than 200 Manobo families had stopped going to school. "They don't have food and transportation money," said Sam Salice.

"Besides, they now fear being kidnapped. By suspected regional accused army to collect."

"There are with impunity because they have legal papers and have the local government on back them," Sam Salice lamented, referring to the attackers.

Doubts over the authenticity of Cloa beneficiaries have grown stronger. "I believe that not all [of the supposed beneficiaries] are qualified," Freddie Flores told the bureau by phone.

Flores, a former mayor of Don Carlos, is now the provincial administrator. The governor was out for a village consultation when the bureau called up.

Flores confirmed that it was with Jun Jocson's blessing that the pineapple project started.

"The mayor knows everything; politicians caution the governor have to jump in] to solve the land problem," the administrator insisted. He denied claims that the local government was not duly informed of the project.

Not a single suspect has been arrested, although some had been identified.

Ironically it is the tribe's members who now face criminal charges filed by the pineapple proponent.

Church groups nix coal-fired plants

By Nestor T Burgos Jr.
PhilVisayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Catholic and Protestant church groups have joined environmental and militant organizations in opposing plans to put up coal-fired power plants in northern Iloilo.

In a three-page pastoral statement dated Jan. 16, two archbishops and six bishops in Western Visayas and Dumaguete said they stood firmly against the putting up of the plants in their dioceses.

"Our preferential bias is for environmentfriendly renewable energy technologies and projects," the prelates said in their statement that will be read in Masses on Feb. 20.

Those who signed the statement were Capiz Archbishop Jerome Gariguella, Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, Kalibo Bishop Jose Romeo Lazo, Bacolod Bishop Vicente Navarra, Romblon Bishop Jose Corazon Tala-ot, San Carlos Bishop Jose Advincula, Antique Bishop Bonnie de la Cruz and Kabankalan Bishop Patrick Buzon.

In a separate statement, the Diocese of Iloilo of the Aglipay Filipino Independents, said its members especially parishioners in northern Iloilo will launch various activities to oppose the plants.

The Committee on Social Issues and Environmental Concerns of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches also declared its opposition to coal-fired plants.

"Allowing the establishment of coal-fired plants is leading the people direct pollution and poisoned waters," it said in a statement.

In the pastoral statement, the bishops said the proposed power plants "though the cheapest are also the thirsty of possible sources of [power]."

They questioned the "reliability and usefulness" of data of the Department of Energy that projects a power deficit by 2007 on Panay Island.

Based on these projections, government officials including Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas Jr. are pushing for the construction of the plants in two coastal municipalities in Iloilo.

The JMC Holdings Inc. and its subsidiary, the Semirara Mining Corp., are proposing to put up a 700-megawatt coal-fired plant in a 30-hectare area in Barangay Nipa, Concepcion town, about 111 km north of Iloilo City.

Mirant Global is proposing to construct another 150-MW plant in Barotac Viejo town, 64 km north of Iloilo.

The bishops pointed out that submissions received by coal plants do not only contribute to pollution and global warming but also contribute to causes of deforestation in habitat and diseases like cancer.

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MINDORO KILLINGS

Kin seek justice for slain lawyer

CITY OF CALAPAN—On the first death anniversary today of murdered lawyer Jory Magsino and broadcaster Fortu, their respective families and friends are asking for justice as they remember their loved ones.

"During the one-year period, there has been only one hearing conducted on the case," said Magsino's mother, Lorelie.

The hearing was held Feb. 7 at the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 218.

Magsino's father, who took his favorite child's death very seriously, died of heart attack more than a couple of months after, said relatives. Magsino became a lawyer at the request of her father, after his unjust experiences in the law.

Fortu's mother Rosalina and family had written the Inquirer of her of the Philippines on Jan. 11 for legal assistance in the double murder case against Hernando Intorsio and three other unidentified assailants. Intorsio is now in jail.

Magsino was a human rights lawyer and vice mayor of Naujan town when gunned down while driving her vehicle with Fortu, a teacher and acting secretary general Bantayan Mindoro Oriental.

The Bishop Mindoro Oriental-Bro. Jory Magsino Center has joined the Magsino and Fortu families in calling for justice for the two.

"Bishop Abangan visits for women, has been helping battered wives, among others," said Rolando Intorsio, Bishop's aide.

"She lived her life with ordinary people, seeking to comfort their spirits in whatever way she could, giving them strength to stand for their rights and struggle, and giving them the courage in their fight for a righteous and just government," Calapanian said of Magsino.

Mindoro Update Stringer; PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Reds slam E. Visayas posting of Army exec

LUZON CITY—Communist Party of the Philippines spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal protested the assignment of militarization and human rights violations in Eastern Samar with the appointment in the area of a controversial Army official.

Rosal said the promotion of Brig. Gen. Jovito Palparan as commander of the Army's 8th Infantry Division based in the area, "shows the callousness of the Armed Forces of the Philippines with regard to the victims of Palparan's wave of terror in his area of responsibility."

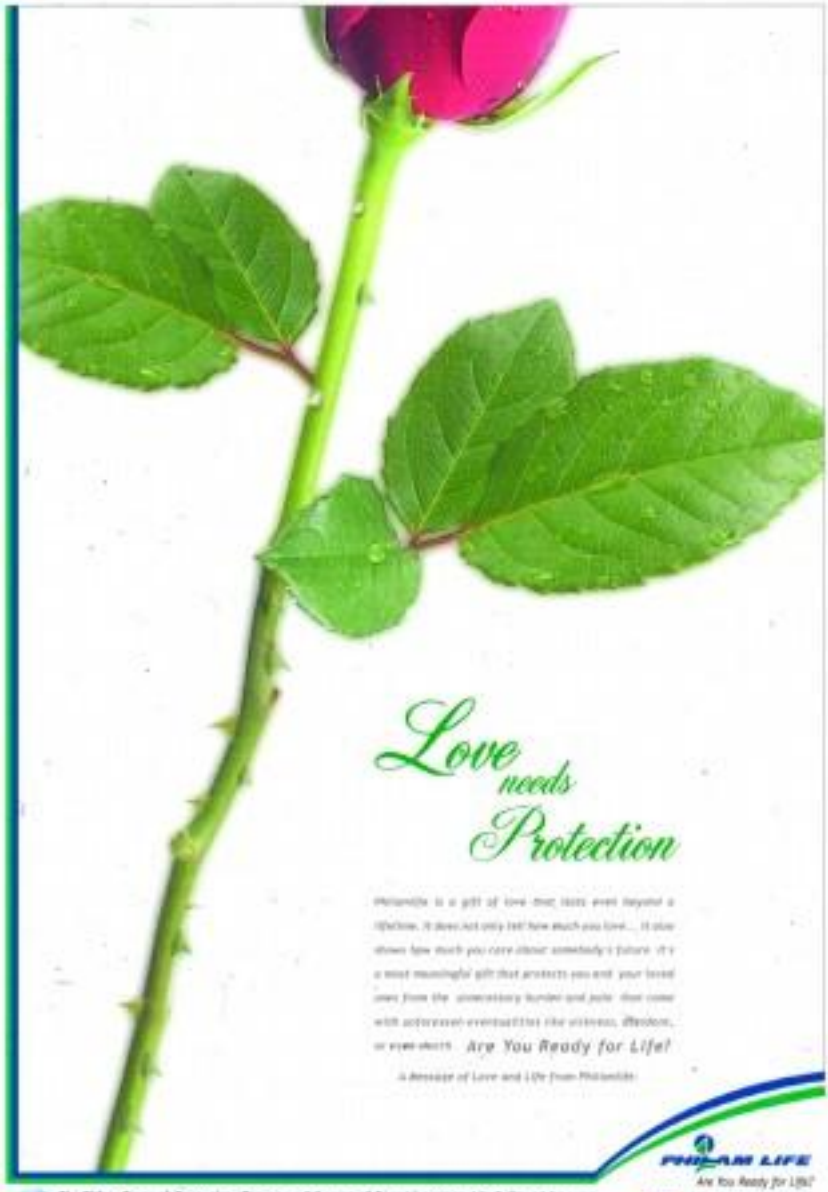
"The Aquino regime has once again rewarded one of its most vicious fascist commanders with a promotion," Rosal said.

Palparan has been reassigned to head the Army's 8th Infantry Division operating in Samar and Leyte following the retirement of Maj. Gen. Glen Rabonza.

He was widely held responsible for numerous cases of summary executions of leftist activists in Mindoro, where he was chief of the Army's 204th Infantry Brigade from 2003 to 2006.

Despite several cases filed against him for gross human rights violations, Palparan has had a steady and upward career path in the military. —**Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau**

PALPARAN



More lumber seized in Mindoro, Albay

BACO, Oriental Mindoro—Some 300 board feet of abandoned lumber and roundlogs Philippine mahogany lumber were confiscated by members of the 404th Provincial Mobile Group of the Oriental Mindoro Provincial Police Office on Thursday in Sta. Tibia, Barangay Sta. Rosa 2, about 10 km from this town's poblacion.

Police found the abandoned wood products after a concerned citizen reportedly tipped them off.

PCI Reynaldous Pastrada, team leader of the 404th PMG, said the raids that ensured in the weight of Feb. 9 could have helped clobber the lumber down through the slippery mountain trail in the area, whose strong current could have carried them to where they were found.

The police found the lumber underneath several rubble made of bamboo tied together with a flower in the middle.

The raids were encarrying bananas and vegetables as camouflage.

"You would see native Batis Fuel for the engine as the key ingredient," said Pastrada.

The area is a dead end where a motorboat or truck was docked.

"Illegal logging cannot be happening without the knowledge of concerned officials," said Pc Allen Pallacio, who was with the raiding team.

Juanculda Ural, Department of Environment and Natural Resources head in Oriental Mindoro, however, reiterated that there was no illegal logging in the province.

"This is guerrilla-type timber poaching. Illegal logging refers to a widespread operation, from 50 to 100 hectares," he clarified.

Ural added that he issued a memorandum on Dec. 13, 2004, to the military police, Coast Guard and maritime affairs to provide security to the DENR Task force in watching checkpoints.

Pallacio said that since he was assigned to Baco town years back, he had been receiving information on illegal logging in that place.

"But the Quezon experience pushed me to act. We will be like Quezon in 10 years if this goes unabated," he said.

PCI Serafin Lolong of the 404th PMG said his group, while looking for a "mantaf" rubber in 2003, found more than 2,000 board feet of logs in a mill site, as eight boats' with up the Baco mountains.

Dela Cruz confirmed that the area was one of the identified hot spots for lumber transport.

Other hot spots are Barangay Lisap in Bongabong town and Barangay Villa Cerveza in Victoria town.

In Sitio Sawpal in Barangay Camarpasan, Naujan, about 32 km from the poblacion, 74 lifelines of illegally sawn wares worth P20,000 were confiscated on Feb. 5 from Jennifer Montellora, 24, and Meynard Cruz, 34, both from Barangay Antipolo of the same town.

A team from the 404th PMG led the army's 204th Infantry Brigade caught them cutting down The tree. The two said they were paid P150 per day for the job.

A police source said the tree was about 70 years old, more than 1.5 m in diameter and as high as an electric post.

This prompted about 40 residents of Barangay Camarpasan to sign a manifesto on Feb. 3 objecting to the cutting down of trees in their place.

In Tiwi, Albay, police seized some 250 pieces of abandoned lumber of mixed species in different sizes, which were earlier discovered scattered along the shoreline of Barangay Maroroy.

Chief Insp. Froilan Severino, team leader of the 901st Provincial Police Mobile Group, said the nearly 10cbm were unloaded from a motorized banca locally known as "jeepney" as the shoreline of the village.

Initial police investigation showed that the lumber came from Camalaniugan and were supposed to be transported to Manila when they were discovered in Tiwi.

Some of the seized logs are now temporarily in the Tiwi Municipal Police Station for safekeeping.

Others are now under the custody of the Albay Provincial Police Office here.

Abadesses Ovalo, Leo Morris S. Bennar and Jed D Bacuno, PIA South Area Luzon Bureau

HOT NEWSPAPERS Bel Marra furnishers places more than 1,000 in the van in Santa Fe. Photo by Pelagio.

Newspaper delivery truck yields hot narra

SANTA FE, Nueva Vizcaya—Agents of the National Bureau of Investigation here seized a newspaper delivery truck found transporting undocumented narra furniture.

Lawyer Florencio Bunoza, NBI district chief here, said the truck, which used to distribute copies of a broadsheet and a tabloid newspaper in four Luzon provinces, was discovered loaded with P200,000 worth of narra furniture bound for Metro Manila on Jan. 30.

NBI agents chased and caught up with the delivery truck in Barangay Cuyapo in Santa Fe town, about 50 km from here, after tracking a tip it ran as informant, Bunoza said.

An inventory of the items seized showed that about 30 pieces of furniture—a bed, a table and chairs—were not declared in the shipping documents issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Magsaysay, Isabela.

The items belonged to the Santa Maria Multi-Purpose Cooperative and the Aliaga-gan Multi-Purpose Cooperative, both in Ilagan, Isabela.

Bunoza said they seized the cargo against truck drivers Ricardo Calabaza and Lizardo Delgado and truck owner Rogelio Ilida.

Bunoza said the truck delivers newspapers to short routes in Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Nueva Vizcaya and Isabela. On their return trip to Metro Manila, they haul up the truck with pieces of furniture.

"According to one of the suspects, they have become a popular hauler among furniture traders because they are spared from inspection when passing through checkpoints," he said.

Antonio D Quilpe, DENR Cagayan Valley director, ordered Rolando Ignigo, Nueva Vizcaya environment officer, to investigate why the alleged contraband had managed to pass through the DENR checkpoints in Cordon, Isabela, and Santa, Nueva Vizcaya.

Apigo said he had asked the NBI to turn over the case to them for verification of the documents. "We would like to assure them that there will be no whitewash in this investigation," he said. Melvin Gascon, PIA North-ern Luzon Bureau

For Muslim-Christian pair, love conquers all

Front page 81

all put along, whatever ideology and belief. The business line is, we're all equal. Liberal and Christianity both produce equality."

As she and Michelle celebrate their first Valentine's Day as a couple, Michelle said she placed her trust in the sinduranon of their religions.

"We both believe in one God. If you're not religious that's going to judge us in the afterlife. It's how we treat other people. It's how we live," she said.

Khaye and Michelle were wed here in solemn rites under Shinto law on Jan. 28. Their 20 nuptial sponsors covered that the marriage symbolized unity—long chains in several sources Hinduism.

Among the sponsors were Libya Ambassador Jabeir Adam, Saudi Arabian Ambassador Mohammed Amin Wali, Sen. Richard Gordon, tattoo artist Jun Escobar, Bureau of Immigration Edgardo Antonio, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, Jr. and Manila Mayor Lito Atienda.

Khaye's mother, Ibai Patty Norbuena, who unfortunately with the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor, refused the call to unity.

"We Filipinos should unite regardless of religion. We should open our hearts and minds to each other," Norbuena said.

"The solution to the Mindanao problem lies in the hearts and minds of non-Muslim Filipinos. We should accept that we are Filipinos like them. That is the message," she added.

Since childhood

Khaye and Michelle said their marriage ended their love and signaled their struggle to make their families accept the relationship.

The two were classmates and friends from Grade 7 through high school in Ecle Montessori in Mandaluyong.

Michelle went to Switzerland and finished a course in financial and investment management and then headed herself to the family-owned hotel business in Metro Manila. Khaye went to De La Salle University where he earned a psychology degree.

In between her studies abroad and her duties in managing the family business, Michelle spent time in Bulungo City in Bataan.

There, the great-grandson of the late Sen. Sharpe Alonto, the late nationally-elected Muslim senator, studied between Manuel City and Metro Manila and started a career in government service.

Romance, finally

It seemed their paths would never cross in March 2002, the two remember, in a crowded Luzon Hall.

Michelle was interested in his extreme things was already familiar with Christian ways, having grown up in a Christian environment.

It was, as they say, inevitable. They fell in love.

When they decided to get married, their parents at first found it hard to accept the union.

NEWLYWED Ahmad Khaye Alonto II and Michelle Robles.

YOKOTA SHIGEKO CENTRAL LUZON DAILY

The resistance, the couple explained, was not because of differences in faith.

"They were worried for us—how the differences in our cultures would make things difficult for us," Michelle said.

From the heart

Khaye and Michelle decided to "fight for our love."

He wrote his father a long letter, pleading for understanding. His bold long conversations with his father, and eventually with the whole family, both sides.

They spoke from the heart.

Then suddenly resistance came forward.

Cristaldo, the brother of Michelle's mother, turned out to be a longtime friend of Alonto's.

Nathalia, who has been married to Alonto for 34 years, became Khaye's strongest ally.

"I did not realize it's supposed to say husband first. I really learned the relationship. I tried to paint the sexuality because my husband is a good man and he has a good heart," Nathalia said.

He finally sees the love they had for each other. Who are we to plan? Who are we to dictate on our son? If he's in love with Michelle, there must be something about her," she said, recalling the time her husband finally gave his consent to the union.

Breaking traditions

With that, traditions were broken.

"All of my siblings' marriages were arranged by my parents. I was the first to choose my wife," Khaye said.

"I was the first in the family to marry a non-Christian," Michelle said.

They chose to marry in Pampanga, a former Muslim sultanate.

The bride wore a pink Muslim inspired gown designed by their sisters and a mix of pink pearls and gemstones.

Under the guidance of an imam (Muslim cleric) and in rites that allowed only male members of the clan, Khaye spent more time exchanging vows with the father of the bride than with the bride herself. He said his vows three times, affirming his love for Michelle.

The couple said the marriage ceremonies was just the first step. They awaited news a lot of paperwork and a lot of time to make their unique marriage work.

Khaye said: "We are taking things one day at a time. The important thing is we are together."

Massacre of Agustinians, San Juan de Dios staff

From page 81

closet sin and patios.

"Sister Caridad Ocampo, 61, was a Daughter of Charity on the staff of Saint Jude College in Intramuros. Sister Caridad had accompanied the Mother Superior of Manila hotel to seek shelter for her community in San Agustin. Sister Caridad found herself a new role as girls rushed up to her and the other nuns, seeking protection. Japanese personnel, single and in groups, were going about dining flashlights or lamps into the faces of the inmates. Any one they fancied would be taken forcibly to secluded corners ... and subjected to unspeakable abuse ...," an eyewitness account said.

The Augustinians of the San Agustin Museum, Fr. Pedro Galende OSA, said the Japanese that the Augustinian superior in 1945, Rev. Manuel Diez Canseco, and his 11 priests were their best to help the Dominican of evacuees.

"It was not the first time that our church and convent had played such a role. Civilians also sought shelter after the big scale quakes in the 17th century and during the Chinese and British invasions," he said.

Lone survivor

Father Galende said Intramuros's defenders mounted all but one of the Augustinians, together with 14 other Spanish priests. The lone survivor was the current procurator, Fr. Belarmino de Cela, OSA. He later retired to the Basque region of Spain.

As told by Brother Alan, Sr. that Dr. Cela and the five other religious, along with 80 civilians, were marched out to the ruined Palacio del Gobernador. Among the civilians was Dr. Antonio Llabery Jr.

They were surrounded by soldiers and herded into two large cows in the ruins of the Palacio. Dr. Cela was among the first to enter the larger cave and that he was pressed all the way in the back. The Japanese threw live grenades through the ventilation holes of the chamber. The Augustinian priest was decapitated. Others died and simply by the packed bodies in front of him.

Alan continues the survivor's story: "He was but slightly hurt by the grenade explosions although his face was bloodied. Apparently he made his way to the entrance and clawed through the earth wall until he made a small hole through which he breathed the accessible ...

"Inside the cave there was eerie silence, broken only by the painful moans of the dying. The dead bodies began to stink. The fear showed some more as his bowels and it grew bigger ... Dawn and immediately with his bare hands, Father Dr. Cela finally managed the hole enough for him to crawl out into the open. That night, he lay among the weeds to the open sky."

San Juan de Dios Hospital

On Feb. 6, 1945, "a group of 20 to 30 Japanese ... entered the San Juan de Dios hospital in Intramuros, accompanied by the senior physician still on duty, Dr. Manuel Llabes, who assumed the functions of acting director, the Japanese inspected the hospital and searched the wards, the rooms and the private quarters of the staff. The hospital was inspected only a matter of minutes. Soon to the staircase to South Manila (Sur) American artillery had been making extremely serious hits on Japanese gun emplacements ...

"The staff of Dr. Llabes at this time included the resident physician Dr. Cecilio Enriquez and the hospital dentist Dr. Leandro Cabahug, with a nursing staff composed largely of Daughters of Charity. There were also about 30 hospital attendants and 60 patients, six of whom were Japanese.

'What horrors'

"The Japanese officer ordered the staff to evacuate the premises as the building would be burned. Dr.[illegible] San Juan de Dios group formed a ragged procession in the street, carrying their patients, made his way to the entrance and clawed through the earth wall until he made a small hole through which he breathed the accessible ...

"Inside the cave there was eerie silence, broken only by the painful moans of the dying. The dead bodies began to stink. The fear showed some more at his bowels and it grew bigger ... Dawn and immediately with his bare hands, Father Dr. Cela finally managed the hole enough for him to crawl out into the open. That night, he lay among the weeds to the open sky."

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'What horrors'

"The Japanese officer ordered the staff to evacuate the premises as the building would be burned. Dr.[illegible] San Juan de Dios group formed a ragged procession in the street, carrying their patients, and headed for the ruins of the Santa Rosa college ...

"We were an odd bunch but at least we were all together," recalls Sr. Concepcion Gomez in her memoirs. "Some mothers were mortified with grief with dead infants in their arms; human bodies traveled alive in the first ground to ... uncomprehending children searching over their mothers' bodies and sobbed children on the hard earth.

"It about 2 o'clock on Saturday, Feb. 17, Mrs. Bessie Labes, 31, was found fast asleep in their makeshift shelter in the ruins of Santa Rosa college. A hospital attendant came in to tell her that the Japanese were looking for the hospital director. Dr. Labes dressed and put on his shoes. He got his service stuff together consisting of the physician bolongs and the dentist Cavalieri.

"With three male medical attendants—Luis Ubalda, Lazaro Cardero and Gonzalo Fil...they went out to meet the Japanese. From the Santa Rosa college ruins, the Japanese soldiers brought the six men across a small plaza in the ruins of the Santo Domingo church. Here the men were lined up against a wall and bayonetted to death," Gomez narrated.

Forgiveness plea

Just before the bayonet struck, Dr. Isabel's father, a Japanese, had sought his forgiveness.

The Japanese later burned him at the side of the San Agustin Church, preserving his joining the mass grave in which lay the other male doctors and patients.

Manuel's wife Benita, who had witnessed the killing of her husband, related this to Antonio Labut, Manuel's brother, when she came to Tigui, Ilocos Sur, to prevent Manuel's bones sometime in the 1950s. The bones are now in the family mausoleum.

The Japanese who killed Manuel could have been his prime or friend, said Antonio, quoting Benita.

Benita has since remarried, Antonio, 88, a retired surgeon, told the bureau. Since Benita buried over Manuel's remains in the Labut family they have never been in touch, Antonio said.

Manuel was the acting director of the Quezon Institute when the Japanese occupied Dr. building and transferred its physicians, patients and personnel to the San Juan de Dios Hospital in Intramuros, according to historians.

Hell breaks loose

Francisco Gomez-Jaro, her five children and several other families soon found their place at the Redemptorist compound as Christian sanctuaries because of the Labut dwelling and burning around them. They sought shelter at the Philippine General Hospital on Taft Avenue. The PGH became their temporary home as it was for thousands of other civilians.

The oldest Jaro girl Estelita, who later became a broadcast journalism matron, led her siblings in scrounging for food around the hospital grounds. The boundaries from Ft. troops closing in on the Japanese intensified. Sheila raised over the compound, crackling into the hospital wards.

Estelita Jaro

Soon the people rushed madly down corridors and crowded into halls, as the remaining glass panels shattered and small missiles flew. The PGH wards swirled in confusion.

The account to "by friend and fire" continued: "The Jaro family had to move again.

"Estelita, the eldest daughter at 14, helped her mother calm her brood. The girl accepted to pick up her bundle of clothes and, as she did so, a burst of shrapnel nearly sliced off her right arm, gashed her left arm and crushed her left fingers and her fatalities did not know this ... She was to a days and somehow her view of things was not correct. A clay particle of steel had embedded itself in her right eye.

"That was the first selection of American soldiers rushed in through the front gate of the hospital. Estelita looked up from her crocheter into the face of one of the American soldiers and she exclaimed, 'America, you rescue us last.'" With a report from BJ Sta. Fe Research

Conclusion: "I owe my father the freedom to."

Rice charms Europe, but skepticism remains

Front page 81

to lead a threat to destroy Israel.

"The point is that the prospect of the regime that we consider to be a destabilizing ... for peace and security internationally," Bar said.

"That's why there has been, I think, now very strong international consensus that Iran cannot be allowed to go down that route," she added, stressing that Britain, France and Germany have "given the Iranians an opportunity to demonstrate that they are serious about living up to their international obligations."

Close consultations

In Brussels, Rice said the United States remained in "close consultation" with its European allies on the issue, and insisted that Washington would not accept that drug ring and that Iran could not indefinitely delay accountability for its nuclear weapons program.

She pointed out that the United States had set deadlines for Iran to act. Britain, France and Germany have engaged Iran in serious negotiations to persuade the country to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

While the United States has backed the dialogue, it has kept a distance from the effort, saying it not, according to diplomatic sources, expect the talks to succeed.

Washington has indicated it would ask the UN Security Council to impose sanctions on Iran, if the dialogue failed. The European Three are less important than the United States on referring the issue to the United Nations.

Rice softened this impatience when she chaired the European Three for not taking a tougher line with Iran over its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

The difference in the US and European approaches to the Iran issue underscored the difficulties surrounding the healing of the trans-Atlantic alliance.

Bitterness dissipated

The overcast of diplomatic appearances has been hard to overcome despite the more amiable sentiment in which Rice was received by the European leaders.

The hostility and bitterness that marked relations between then and President George W. Bush in the wake of the invasion of Iraq have given way to a more pragmatic approach.

Apparently gone is Rice's visit into the antagonists that the EU officials created when, as national security adviser of the first Bush administration, she said at the height of the invasion of Iraq that was "Paris or Russia, ignore Germany and punish France."

Washington was so angry at the Swiss French opposition to the UN invasion of Iraq that Americans officials took the silly action of renaming French fries from the menus of the Capitol Hill cafeteria, renaming them as "freedom fries."

European Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson said that with Rice's visit, the United States and European Union had pulled back from the "abyss of a trans-Atlantic rift."

Reflecting a conciliatory tone after meeting the European leaders, Rice said: "This is an alliance that understands that its future is common. The times are different a year or two years ago. What has changed is a much stronger desire to resolve our differences rather than live with our differences and to pursue cooperation that the challenges that confront us have to be tackled on the basis of shared analysis, common outlook and agreed action."

In a keynote speech at the French Institute d'Etudes Politiques, Rice said Europe and the United States must "turn away from the disappointments of the past" and work together for common democratic goals in the Middle East and around the world.

She said the United States and Europe stood deeply for and respected each other and should "discuss and decide together" on their common agenda.

Paying tribute to the historical ties between the United States and France, Rice said: "Imagine where we would be today if the brave founders of French liberty and of American liberty had been content to turn their backs on each other ... America has everything to gain from having a stronger Europe as a partner in building a stronger and better world."

Elegant twist

It took French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier to give the exchange of pleasantries at the foreign ministry at Quai d'Orsay an elegant turn with a demonstration of the famous common skepticism. "We helped you in your birth [as a nation] sometimes, [you helped us not to die]," Barnier said.

The press scrutinized and mentioned on Rice's clothes and hair. "Cool!"...smart suits, something about bright hues of peach that only purists, and "never a hair out of place."

Despite the warm atmosphere, observers said US-European efforts will not be easily resolved.

Reflecting the lingering suspicions in Rice's mission, former French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing said: "In the past, one spoke of alliance led by the United States. Now we are moving to a relationship of equals that is partnership with Europe."

Taking the same tack, Barnier welcomed Rice's call for a fresh start, but emphasized that the allies had to "listen to each other more and support each other's opinions. Alliance is not allegiance," he said.

Painted response

The French commission were a pointed response to Rice's speech at the Paris think tank.

She said that United States was committed to an effective United Nations, to Iran and to good relations with democratic Europe allies.

Rice then insisted the United States would continue to fight injustice "outside their formal frameworks," and that US foreign police would continue to be based on commitment to democratic change in the Middle East and the support of freedom and liberty everywhere."

Some commentators have observed that just because the French and the Germans "were intrigued and, to the end, charmed" by her, doesn't mean they had better disposed to George Bush and his view of the world."

Tatad: Pagcor operating …

From page B-1

for in the 1977 presidential decree that created Pagcor and gave the state-owned Swiss 23-year franchise.

"Without a valid franchise, Pagcor's gambling operations would be no different nor from a criminal syndicate's clandestine activities," Tatad said in a statement.

Pagcor operates casinos where slot machines and table games are played. In 2002, its income reached P28.12 billion. The following year, it remitted P8 billion to the government.

Pagcor is mandated to give a portion of its earnings to the Presidential Social Fund, which is sometimes described as the President's pork barrel.

Tatad accused Malacañang and administration lawmakers of linking the franchise expiration date by making it appear that the gaming corporation was given a fresh, 23-year term when then President Ferdinand Marcos consolidated the five Pagcor-related decrees into Presidential Decree No. 1869 on July 11, 1983.

Marcos consolidated PDs 1067-A, B, C, 1399 and 1632 to facilitate their enforcement and application, for also amended some of the provisions in the decree, but the 25-year term of Pagcor's franchise "was not disturbed at all," Tatad said.

Railroaded

"The Arroyo administration rushed its creation too late, in an effort to come up in its memorandum, the Congress railroaded last December a bill that deliberately misrepresents the 25-year franchise as having taken effect only on July 11, 1983, instead of Jan. 1, 1977, and expiring only on July 11, 2008, instead of having already expired on Jan. 1, 2002," Tatad said.

House Bill No. 3489, now in the Senate, seeks to amend PD 1869 by granting Pagcor a new 25-year franchise, renewable for another 25 years "from the expiration of its original term on July 11, 2008," Tatad said.

"It is a gravely flawed and ignominy bill. It is pure bones-pocus," he said. "Still, the deception will not work. The corrupt bill must be stopped. The Senate, if it is still worth anything, must throw it out."

Old issue

Pagcor public relations official Andre King dismissed Tatad's charge, saying it was a rehash of old accusations by Batangas Rep. Hernando Mendoza.

Last year, Mendoza filed House bill No. 3217 that sought to abolish Pagcor. He claimed that its franchise had expired in 2002.

Mendoza was one of the few lawmakers who resisted ratifying objection to Bill 3489 while it was still under House deliberation.

"It's an old story, it's an old issue," King said.

King said PD 1869 effectively superseded the original presidential decrees even though it did not have any specific wording about the 25-year term being renewed.

Regular process

Asked about Tatad's allegation, Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri (Lab-Bukidnon), chair of the House committee on legislative franchises, said Bill 3489 went through the regular legislative process.

"How can it be railroaded when it was disbanded on the floor twice to a time?" Zubiri said.

"That is how railroaded. Speaker [Jose de Venecia could have gone home early and probably saved his house and his daughter from fire," he said.

Zubiri was referring to the approval of the bill on third and final reading on the night of Dec. 30 at about the same time a fire was razing the Makati residence of De Venecia, an incident that claimed the life of the Speaker's youngest daughter JC.

The chair of the committee on legislative franchises said HB 3489 was given priority because it was considered a non-revenue measure. Pagcor is one of the biggest income-generating state firms.

Zubiri said his committee held public hearings on the bill, which was passed on third reading during the last 12th Congress but did not become law.

Until 2007

He said the original Pagcor franchise of 25 years was supposed to expire in 2002. But he said Marcos issued a decree five years after the original Pagcor charter was written, extending the Pagcor franchise to 2007.

"Pagcor has secured a number of favorable rulings and resolutions from the Department of Justice from may both upholding the validity of its franchise until 2007," Zubiri said.

He recalled that some congressmen had claimed that Pagcor's franchise had expired in 2002.

"But during the floor deliberations, we told them that it was not up to Congress to determine whether or not Pagcor has been operating either legally or illegally since 2002," Zubiri said.

"We stood by our opinion that it was up to the courts, particularly the Supreme Court, to resolve this question," Zubiri said.

"As far as my committee was concerned, Pagcor has sour rulings and DOJ opinion saying its franchise is good up to 2007," he said. Reports from ISP Rep. JED Resurreck, and Carlito Rubiz

Dr. Howard Gardner with the REX Editorial Team

True to its commitment of producing quality educational materials for all Filipino learners, REX Book Store, Inc. (REX), sent all its editors from basic education to the college level to listen and learn more from Dr. Howard Gardner, the Father of Multiple Intelligences (inset). REX editorial team join the over 2000 delegates of the 1st Philippine Multiple Intelligences Convention held in Manila Hotel, February 11-13, 2005.

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RP-Japan drug link eyed

THE PHILIPPINES could be a source of shabu entering Japan, thus the National Bureau of Investigation and the Japan police have agreed to cooperate in battling the menace.

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco, who flew to Japan in the last week of January, said the bureau and the Japanese National Police had agreed to provide each other with data about the latest trends in the manufacture of shabu.

The trends pertain to the latest equipment, processes and modus operandi that the illegal drug manufacturers use, he said.

"[We have] agreed to help and support each other to address the illegal drug problem. This is a very positive development," he said. Lella B. Atabay reports

BRUTAL MURDER

Septuagenarian friends in pre-Valentine killing

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

AFTER shooting her in the back of the head, the killer stashed his victim, as if to make sure, the 71-year-old victim was dead.

That scene played out the last moments in the life of Rosalia Lopez, who was murdered along with her housemate Leogardo Tarac, 70, in Quezon City, 20 minutes past midnight Saturday.

Lopez and Tarac had just arrived from a pre-Valentine's Day party and were stepping out of a cab in front of their house on Makabayan Extension in Barangay Obrero when the murders struck.

With his gun blazing, the attacker repeatedly shot Tarac, hitting the latter five times in the head, according to investigator PO2 Jan Formanes.

Some of the bullets went through the head of Tarac, who was sitting in the front passenger seat, and hit the right arm of cab driver Jessy Rampal, 46.

Dead on the spot

Tarac died on the spot, while Rampal was later taken to a hospital.

After peppering the septuagenarian man's head with lead, the attacker turned to Lopez as the back seat and shot her twice.

The bullet hit Lopez in the nape and ceased her in clamp inside the seat.

Fortunately, police said, a daughter of Lopez who accompanied her and Tarac to the party in nearby Barangay Pilahan managed to run away after the initial shots were fired.

Police said that when the shooting stopped, the assailant took out a knife, walked up to Lopez and ran the blade across her neck before making his escape.

Lopez later died while undergoing treatment at the East Avenue Medical Center.

An on-the-scene search did not produce any spent shells and prompted police to believe that the suspect used a revolver in the attack.

Attacker not identified

Later, during investigation at the Central Police District headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Regina said that she did not know the attacker.

According to her statement to the police, she and Lopez were acting as companions to Tarac, who repeatedly entered the house on Makabayan Extension.

"They said they were taking care of him," PO2 Formanes told the Inquirer.

However, Regina clarified that they were not employees of Tarac and that the male victim only occasionally gave them money.

Asked if Lopez and Tarac had a deeper relationship other than being friends, Regina said they did not.

She told police that her mother had long been separated from her father, whom she said was abroad.

Police refused to comment on any possible motive in the brutal murder.

MMDA advises lovers to simply stay home

By Irene C. Perez

A LOT of tooting and revving will be going on today but that perfect Valentine's Day date might just get spoiled by traffic.

Blitz lovers requested in flash mails, hoods and mobs today, Metropolitan Manila Development (MMDA) Chair Bayani Fernando is telling couples to be ready for heavy traffic, especially in the evening.

Otherwise, Fernando's advice in his thesis to spend Valentine's Day at home.

"Traffic might spoil your day. Couples who don't want the hassle can stay home and settle for fast food orders, or even home cooked food," Fernando said.

The MMDA chair said traffic flow in the metropolis would not be unusual for this day of hearts. However, he added that traffic enforcers would be deployed in areas traditionally frequented by lovers.

He identified some of these as roads leading to malls, restaurants and moviehouses in Makati, Quezon City and Mandaluyong.

Fernando also pointed out Sta. Mesa in Manila, Cubao in Quezon City, Ortigas City and Pasig City, which host a number of motels and apparent no-tell-motels usually jam-packed during this season.

One to two traffic enforcers will be deployed in intersections near these "hot spots," said Angelito "Angel de Dios, MMDA Traffic Operations Center Executive Director.

In case of need, the agency has motorcycle units to respond to traffic problems, he added.

Nonetheless, Angel de Dios said Metro Manila's roads might be spared the onslaught of heavy traffic because of hard times.

He said married couples might choose to stay home instead of spend Valentine's Day outside.

Angel de Dios also noted that it was a day short of payday so traffic might be put off until after Feb 15.

Fate works against most wanted man

By Luige A. del Puerto

TEN CAN hide from the authorities, but can you run away from fate?

For more than a year, a suspect in the killing of PCC Michael Dennan Gaspay in November 2003 has evaded arrest.

But on Friday night, fate caught up with Ronnie dela Rosa when he took a joyride and shared a ride with a colleague of Gaspay at the Mission Rizal District.

"What a coincidence," blurted Sr. Supt. Ernesto Velasquez, chief of the Mandaluyong police. "They took the same jeepney."

Velasquez said PO3 Jaime Villanueva of the WPD saw De la Rosa at about 11:30 p.m. then sought help from police in following Mandaluyong City.

De la Rosa, who was believed to be residing in Manila, was carrying with a drug of pendrod when apprehended.

Gaspay was gunned down by four men on board a white taxicab in November 2003.

"He has admitted responsibility as an Imam three counts of robbery, but he denied shooting PO3 Gaspay," Velasquez said.

"What matters is that there is a warrant out for him, and that he has been identified as one of Gaspay's killers," the police official said.

Runaway monkey pestering Makati village folk

By Irene C. Perez

IF YOU pass by San Miguel Village in Makati City and happen to see a monkey perched on a tree or electric post, call the police or SPCAM immediately.

The primate has allegedly been pestering village folk in the Barangay Poblacion community for a week now, and efforts to catch it have been futile, Anthony Tiara, security officer of the village yesterday said.

Tiara said the monkey which was as big as a year old baby, could have been someone's pet, but no one's claiming it.

According to him, the furry animal shows itself in the mornings and late afternoons, appearing in one street and popping up in another.

In the week it had been loose, the monkey has reportedly destroyed property and ransacked the ice of residents in the village of about 300 families, Tiara said.

The other day, it broke a car wiper on E Lubid Street.

Saturday afternoon, it took and broke a 9-year old boy's toy on the same street.

Because their village is lined with trees, Tiara said the monkey picked up the habit of throwing fruits on passersby on Candelaria Street.

There are also reports that the monkey once entered a house on Layag Street and snatched bottles.

On another occasion, the primate ripped laundry off a resident's clothesline.

Tiara said they hope to catch the monkey before the residents' patience runs out.

The security officer explained that if everything failed, they might be forced to shoot it with an air gun.

Parañaque goes online

By Irene C. Perez

RESIDENTS of Parañaque can now access their grievances over garbage or expired unposted drug products in the city using the Internet.

With the launching of www.paranaque.ph's transaction on Saturday, residents need not line up at the City Hall to report complaints, post suggestions or questions.

Parañaque City Vice Mayor Anjo Olano, in a statement, guaranteed confidentiality of all online transactions.

He warned those planning to report illegal activities that "they will be protected. We will not divulge their names especially if the complaint delves on sensitive issues."

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Atienza closes Pagcor arcade

By Terra V. Quismundo

RESPECT our constituents.

With that stance, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza ordered the closure of a slot machine arcade of Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) on Friday afternoon, after the gambling facility allegedly opened illegally during the Chinese New Year.

Operators of the Western Police District Special Operations Group enforced the order and shut down the arcade inside the Premiere Hotel in Sta. Cruz.

"Some people don't seem to realize that there are certain local regulations that have to be respected. And they proceed on operating it even if they were not allowed to. The user Pagcor will request our director," said Atienza over the phone yesterday.

The mayor said Pagcor tried several times to secure a permit from the city government, but its application was repeatedly denied.

A recent check at City Hall's Business Permission and Development Office showed that slot machine operations inside Premiere Hotel had indeed not been issued a business permit, a requirement for every business establishment in Manila to operate.

"We consider the senatorial [of the nonsensitive], especially since it was right across the church," said Administrator Arsenio at the hotel fronting Sta. Cruz Church.

ADM. Emilio de Cada of the WPD-SOG said investigators observed that the slot machine arcade began operating on Feb. 9, and was open from 2 p.m. until the "wee hours of the morning."

But Emilio King, Pagcor public information officer, said the slot machine arcade was not yet operational.

"Actually, we were calibrating the [slot] machines," King said.

He added that no patron were allowed to play inside the premises.

"Given the climate, I have to check on that," King said in a phone interview yesterday.

The mayor was otherwise okay with Pagcor operations in other parts of the city, including a slot machines arcade inside Bacnotan Suites on the corner of Pagpaa and Gandara Streets in Binondo. The much-protested gaming facility has not opened as of yet.

King said that Pagcor, by law, could put up gaming facilities in Binondo, but that they did not exert this authority and all were disagreements with local officials.

Bomb left in Pasay

By Irene C. Perez

A BOMB was found on Saturday evening on the parking lot fronting the Japanese Embassy and a condominium on Roxas Boulevard in Pasay City.

The Pasay Police Special Weapons and Tactics team defused the bomb wrapped in a camouflage jacket inside a black backpack reportedly left by two unidentified men some 70 meters from the Japanese Embassy and the Anvil Towers, PO2 Ramil Medina said.

According to the police, PO1 Angel de la Cruz of the Pasay police saw two men inquiring at the parking lot and approached them.

As he was coming, one of the suspects flagged an FX taxi and the two fled.

De la Cruz opened the suspicious package with a stick and found the bomb.

Medina said they did not believe that the suspects were targeting the embassy.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2005 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER B1

BUSINESS

EIKI 51 THE BRAIN

Foreign investments slump 54%

By Doris C. Dumlao

FOREIGN direct investments remained by the Philippines slumped by 54.3 percent in 2004 to $680.27 million from a year ago due to the uncertain business environment last year, documents from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas showed.

It was the first time since 2001 that foreign investments in the country had fallen below the $1 billion level, reflecting a number of investor concerns but may despite an improved economic performance.

The slowdown likewise reflected the fact that the higher than-expected domestic economic growth of 6.1 percent posted by the country last year was driven largely by consumption rather than investment spending.

Foreign investment flow to the Philippines steadily rose from $917.07 million in 2001 to $1.43 billion in 2002 and to $1.49 billion in 2003.

In general, offshore investors shunned the country early last year over jitters about the May presidential election. They remained on the sidelines due to worries over the government's fragile fiscal position and exposure of a sovereign credit rating downgrade. These were also concerns about the adverse impact of skyrocketing global oil prices.

As distinguished from investment commitments registered with the Board of Investments, the BSP's report reflects actual foreign exchange inflow from direct investment made by foreigners.

A little more than 36 percent of foreign investment inflow to the country last year came from Singapore, making the city-state the biggest source of investment during the period with a $246-million contribution.

The second biggest contributor was the Netherlands with investments of $100.02 million or about 15 percent of total inflows.

Other top sources were Japan ($63.67 million); Cayman Islands ($48.96 million); Virgin Islands ($44.76 million); the United States ($40.48 million); Thailand ($34.71 million); and France ($34 million).

Manufacturing and telecommunication companies were the biggest beneficiaries of foreign direct equity flow last year.

The manufacturing sector raked

continued on p...

DOF bucks bill on savings incentives

By Michelle F. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance has called for the postponement of the proposed voluntary retirement benefit system, saying the government still could not afford the extended incentives until the fiscal problem has been solved.

The DOF estimated that the government stands to lose potential tax revenue ranging between P1.16 billion and P4.82 billion annually should the Personal Equity and Retirement Account (PERA) bill be enacted into law.

The DOF has raised its opposition despite moves for the Pera scheme's immediate implementation being watched on by Congress and the banking sector.

The Pera bill, several versions of which have been filed in Congress, aims to encourage personal savings and investments for future security through the granting of tax-free privileges.

Under the proposals, any individual or married couple earning income may open a Pera with any accredited bank or non-bank financial intermediary. The end goal is to develop the country's savings rate and help boost the domestic capital market.

But the DOF said that the proposed Pera system, whose immediate implementation is being pushed by the banking sector, was ill-timed.

"Given the huge negative impact of a Pera scheme on government revenue, legislating a Pera at this time does not seem to be in tune with the announced effort in government to bring down the fiscal deficit over the medium term," the DOF said in a position paper.

The DOF said it was supportive of

continued on p...

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Net factor income from abroad (2003 & 2004, in billion pesos)

Source: National Statistical Coordination Board

NET factor income from abroad (NFIA) grew by only 2.6 percent in 2004 as the number of deployed overseas Filipino workers declined while real cash remittances grew by 3.0 percent. NFIA is the net flow of property income to and from the rest of the world and is part of the gross national income.

Marites D. Danao, PDI Research

Provisioning requirement for quality loans slashed to 2%

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE MONETARY Board slashed the loan provisioning requirement for banks' high-quality credit exposure to 2 percent from 10 percent in an incentive to good borrowers and lenders.

"The lower capital charge will reduce the cost of loan coverage of quality companies and will encourage financial market debt securities in the domestic capital market," Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor Alfredo Reyes said on Friday.

"Creditor-banks, for their part, will be able to free up additional capital for lending," he added.

To incentivize banks to clean up their bad assets, however, the BSP earlier announced that the minimum capital charge for non-performing loans (NPLs) would be increased from 10 percent to 15 percent. This will be done through reinvestment in assigned risk weight to better reflect the riskier character of NPLs as opposed to performing loans.

The announcement, approved by the BSP's policy-making body soon to have such the board 2 international capital standards which call for greater risk sensitivity in bank capital adequacy framework.

The assets which will have lower risk weight and thus qualify for the reduced capital charge include banks' holdings of corporate debt securities and loans to companies which are considered of high-credit quality.

"High" credit quality means being rated at least 'AA' or its equivalent by BSP-recognized credit rating agencies, such as Standard & Poor's, Moody's Investor Service, Fitch Ratings or domestic rating agency Philratings.

The BSP is set to fully implement the Basel 2 framework by 2007.

"The MB decided to advance the implementation of certain components of Basel 2 to promote the further development of the domestic capital market and to speed up the clean-up of NPLs," Reyes said.

"A side benefit will be to boost the domestic credit ratings industry which will further support the domestic capital market," Reyes added.

In the meantime, the increase in the loan provisioning for NPLs from 10 percent to 15 percent will be done in four stages to give banks time to adjust to these regulatory issues.

Between the effectivity of this new circular and end-2006, the minimum capital charge for NPLs will be increased to 12.5 percent and further to 15 percent by 2007. Non-performing debt securities will be similarly treated.

The incipient raising housing loans, however, the amount on minimum capital charge will only be from 5 percent to 7.5 percent until end-2006 and to 10 percent by 2007.

"The minimum capital charge for non-performing housing loans is significantly lower than for ordinary non-performing loans, in keeping with the preferential treatment for housing loans which are considered to be of relatively lower risks," Reyes said.

There, new provisioning requirements revealed the BSP's rather notable as 240 shared March 8, 2005.

RAFES

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On a roll?

NO FREE LUNCH
Cielito F. Habito

IT'S been a while since we've seen so much good news on the economic front as we have lately. Latest good news was the weekend run-out country's removal from the money laundering watchlist of the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which should remove any particular disincentive for investors to put their money in the Philippines from now on. Not too long ago (or as just a few weeks ago), analyst friends were still telling me that in talking to investors, I first had to squeeze out whatever good news there could get it out the proverbial pipeline. Those days, there's no need to squeeze. Perhaps that's what prompted the President to declare, in a moment of jubilation, that the economy is "on a roll." The superlatives among us would probably be inclined to believe that 2004 had more joy in it for us, which 2005 is mind-ing to be "back" year. Well, keep those fingers crossed.

Better growth

Actually, the good news started in 2004, but is only getting repeated now.

In Senator's "Eggie World" economic and political briefing last week, we highlighted the fact that the full-year growth of the economy in 2004 had topped both the government's performance target as well as target set by the government and projections made by most think-tanks including ours.

The government had targeted 4.8 to 5.8 percent growth in domestic output (GDP) for 2004, but achieved 6.1 percent, which is also a substantial improvement over the 4.5 percent growth in 2003.

Looking more closely at the figures, all major sectors of the economy did better in 2004 than in 2003. Industry and services also met or surpassed government targets, and did better than in the previous year. And in the recent years, the lowest regional trouble-spot of all, the country contributing to growth, whereas in recent years, one or two regions experienced negative growth or contraction.

An important development was the improvement in performance in manufacturing, whose growth had accelerated through the years to an impressive fourth quarter finish of 6.9 percent, with capacity utilization rates improving to 69 percent in the last year's 7% per cent. This is a welcome departure from the industry's sluggish performance over recent years, that had translated into a considered decline in manufacturing jobs.

Industry also performed well in double-digit growth in October and November, but the disappointing report by December set in and left last week showed that this was not yet necessarily a trend.

Rising markets

What really prompted the President's "on a roll" remark were the positive movements in the two key market indicators in the past few days. Foreign funds entering the stock market in the first 28 days of the year amounted to P13.39 billion net, boosted by the P6.79 billion buy-in by Japanese beverage giant Kirin into the San Miguel Corp. The market's 5% rise in inflation was just about half of the total net inflow of "hot money" expected by the BSP for the same period of $427.2 million, or about P23.5 billion. The rest of the inflows were into purchases of government bonds and treasury bills, as well as other IOUs issued by the private sector.

At the same time, the year-only [illegible] million units into the country, a more 6 percent of what flowed in last month. And the inflows as of last month alone exceeded all cumulative amounts, apparently what we got for the whole year of 2004, which was $466.6 million, $4 million. Then, there's the peso-dollar exchange rate. It's now inclined to reverse-volatility, than money inflows are more the result of a "push" many years a weakening dollar due to borrowed longer lender (and record deficits of the US. Monetary Authority Bureau from $1 dollar-denominated financial assets amid a glut of cops, and we are benefiting from this overdue along with our neighbors.

Last but not least, Canada are also being chosen as by improved economic outcomes, here—including 20.8 Llanera's P34 billion, Globe's P11 billion, SPI's P6.7 billion, and the double- and triple-digit profit growth of other big companies listed in our stock market.

One out of three

Is the economy on a roll, then? In my view prior to government in the economy's performance through most of the 1990s, I had learned to celebrate the health of the economy in terms of the three yardsticks Juan de la Cruz uses: employment, peace and order, and economic issues. Voters would give me since I received figures of indicators like fiscal deficits, balance of payments, consumer rates, and many others that I could not even pronounce, but just assume to have them reach what every Filipino can feel.

Which the look record: as the three? Mahar Mangahas of SWS cautiously reminds us that peace and the foremost economic indicator that Filipinos care about. Unfortunately we all know things are a lot worse on this score. Hunger is rising more than twice as fast as they did last year, at a rate of 3.4 percentage points last year to 11.1 percent. To be fair, of price are mostly to blame for that, and this was largely beyond our control.

How about jobs? Unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2004 was one to 11.9 percent, but the 10.2 percent posted the year before. In other words, jobs lagged behind the growth in production—a phenomenon that has come to be called "jobless growth" by economists. The only good news, as discussed above, pertains to output and income, not employment.

One out of three real results sounds repairing about. And this one good news isn't entirely good news, for two reasons. First, a close look at the fourth quarter growth figure is showing down quarter-to-quarter growth, after adjusting for seasonality, may be cluttered (as we pointed out here some time in 2004. That's why most analysts are growth settling short of 6 percent in 2005. Second, the benefits from the growth we're seeing are being felt only by a few. I've been talking in economic terms and geographical terms, shallow (in terms of linkages in the rest of the economy) and hollow (in terms of creating job-rich jobs). In the words of the IMF's chief, "It's not quite. There's so much to do to work for us to do."

Comments welcome at chabito@cnnexpress.info

New corn variety OKd

THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry has given commercial approval to Bantalog Ready Corn, a new corn variety developed by Monsanto Co. This is expected to result in an increase in farm areas planted to biotechnology or BT corn.

The approval of the new corn variety underscores that countries around the world continue to recognize the safety and benefits of biotechnology agriculture products," says Bert Rapsusan, Monsanto's executive vice president for international communications.

The approval comes after a rigorous review under the strict regulations and oversight of the National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines (NCBP) and agencies of the Department of Agriculture.

Bantalog Ready Corn is the second biotech crop that was approved. The BT corn technology allows growers to use Roundup glyphosate-based agricultural herbicides over the top of growing plants, thereby offering more effective weed control with no herbicide.

In December 2002, YieldGuard Corn Borer insect-protected corn was approved for propagation, which set a milestone for Philippine agriculture as the first biotech food crop approved in Asia. YieldGard Corn Borer corn was planted on 54,000 hectares in 2004, benefiting mostly small Filipino farmers. The product contains bugfree seeds and better quality of grain which translates to better income for the farmers.

Together, these technologies will set the stage for enhanced production of crops that will help the country reduce food insecurity and free the economy of the agricultural economy. The Philippines currently imports 1 million metric tons of corn every year.

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Ruling elites lose SC cases

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

JANUARY had not been a good month to a number of the country's ruling families and personalities, as far as their court cases with the Supreme Court were concerned.

Former Agriculture Secretary now presidential adviser on anti-smuggling Luis Lorenzo Jr. and his family had been rebuffed by the high tribunal in their effort to stop the award of 317 hectares out of the family's sprawling Lapanday Group banana plantation to land reform beneficiaries.

Lorenzo also claimed that it had already paid off hundreds of tenants to give up their rights over the so-called Christ Hughes estate in Mintal, Davao del Sur, a defense line pursued by Justice Cancio Garcia dismissed as "pamilar" and in violation of separate relevant laws.

Closer to the capital, the late Eugenio Lopez Jr. and his brother Manolo and Oscar and sister Presentacion Lopez-Peñalosa also lost an appeal to attach a 56 percent-solution stake in Meralco to meet payoffs of land in Hacienda Luisita under the name of brother Nielson Gamboa Jr. and his wife Juliana Lim and to one Alfonso Sandoval and his wife Rosa Ruiz.

The Lopezes are claiming that Gamboa and Sandoval fraudulently sold the disputed properties to the late Eugenio Lopez Jr. way back in September 1978.

Other spectacular setbacks:

• The Lopezes' own ABS-CBN television network and broadcasters former Sen. Loren Legarda had been ordered by the high SC instead to pay the owners heard a P20,000 fine for failing to submit on October 2001 episode of "The Inside Story" for review prior to airing.

The particular episode, "Prostitution," centered around the Philippine Women's University after the school was named as home to some students moonlighting as sex workers.

• John Gokongwei Jr. lost in his motion for reconsideration to have the Supreme Court reclaim review a September 2000 decision which ordered his corporation but in his appeal to have the December 1993 listing of De Philasea stripped in Initio nullified in his favor.

In an unusual series of legal controversies, the September 2003 Supreme Court resolution originally reversed a November 2000 SC decision, which in turn reversed and set aside a Court of Appeals July 1999 decision.

Gokongwei lost in the bidding after the high court upheld the Committee on Privatization's decision for the Ropped Group to exercise its right to top Gokongwei's bid.

In addition to the Gokongwei multinational, the other members of the Ropped Group include the SM Group, Insular Life, Mitsui and SCTB.

• Former Tourism and Labor Secretary Nieto Custodio has no more choice but to pay more than P1.6 million in damages plus cost of suit to former Philippine Tourism Authority general manager Ramon Binamira, who was the subject of which despicable order from Custodio and the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation in 1990 in connection with the loss of P161-million worth of government securities from PTA.

The bold desperate order was later rescinded by the Makati Regional Trial Court, which also imposed the damages.

Custodio and his counsel, Bernardo and Associates, lost the right to appeal after several motions and to hold the client and the counsel retained unanswered.

Money-go-round

• A GROUP of congressmen who attended Friday's Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council meeting in Malacañang pushed for the appointment of a "further self-capital members and legislative experience instead of a regulator," in the new Energy Regulatory premium. That description seems tailor-made for Oren Serda, who is also being nominated by former President Ramos and House Speaker Jose de Venecia.

• The trustee of AIA Holdings, Senator Bernardo, has been quietly replaced by Julio Hamparo, in the delight of some members of Press.

Heard through the grapevine

PLDT and Metro Pacific chair Manuel V. Pangilinan may have to undergo yet another knee operation.

(Email: andrador_pal@pldtdsl.net or cookie_pal@yahoo.com)

Sun's 24/7 plan stays–NTC

By Clarissa S. Batino

SUN Cellular, the smallest of the wireless players, has been given a temporary reprieve after the National Telecommunications Commission denied the petition of the leading mobile players to stop Sun's 24/7 unlimited, unlimited-text plan.

The NTC denied Digital Mobile Philippines Inc. Friday night in January within 15 days the charges made by no competitor that it was engaging in predatory and discriminatory pricing and that it was delivering poor service vis-a-vis subscribers.

"We denied the request of Digitel's competitors for a cease-and-desist order against 24/7. The Commission believes circumstances don't warrant stopping 24/7 since no prejudice or damage has been done to the public," NTC Chair Reynaldo Vea said in an interview.

The NTC had set hearings on March 7 and 8 to discuss the issues against Sun's 24/7.

Two-year-old Sun Cellular is the trade name of Cotabato-owned Dig-

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Tender offer for Union Cement seen

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission (SEC) has ruled that a bidding company that bought into Union Cement Holdings Corp. (UCHC) is required to buy out all minority shareholders.

The decision is believed crucial for shareholders who own shares in Union Cement Corp., a listed firm now renamed Holcim Philippines Inc., a subsidiary of UCHC.

SEC Chair Bi-Bai Ty said late Friday that the Commission would soon issue its formal ruling on the matter. But Ty early, she said the SEC would require a tender offer.

But while the SEC is still working on the fine points of its ruling, sources at the agency said the tender offer would likely apply to shareholders at the time the acquisition was made last year.

"It is to protect investors. We should work for the development of the capital market and try to ensure the protection of investors," Ty said.

Ty also added that the SEC's interpretation of the Securities Regulation Code under Sec. 10 covering mandatory tender offers was that it should cover both direct and indirect acquisitions.

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PAL seen expanding overseas operations

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE Airlines is seriously considering expanding its overseas operations by flying to new destinations and increasing flights to the United States, Japan and Hong Kong, two officials said.

PAL president Jaime Bautista told the Daily carrier was studying plans to fly more frequently to the US, Japan and Hong Kong while evaluating the viability of increasing flights to Nepal, India and resuming its services to Europe.

Overseas flights account for 70 percent of PAL's total sales, while the remaining 30 percent is accounted for by domestic flights.

Of the total revenue, passenger flights account for 85 percent, while cargoes contribute the remaining 15 percent.

PAL last leased three new Airbus planes, boosting its fleet to 22 aircraft for domestic and overseas operations.

"We may add flights to the US, Hong Kong and Japan. At the US, for instance, of the 30 flight entitlements available, we are using only 20. We can bring this up to 28," said Bautista in an interview.

The PAL official noted improvements in some of PAL's overseas markets, particularly in the US.

"Some routes are still underutilized. Nepal is being considered seriously," said Bautista. The Philippines forged its first air agreement with Nepal last year, allowing local carriers to fly to Kathmandu once a week.

The Napoleon government gave the Philippines a weekly entitlement of 2,100 seats for passenger flights and 300 tons for cargo. Air talks with India are scheduled within the first quarter.

"Europe continues to be underdone evaluations. We will only go there if we can make money. The problem is that yields to Europe are quite low," said Bautista.

He said it was very difficult to compete with Middle Eastern carriers when flying to Europe. Several Middle Eastern carriers have brought down the price of a return trip to Europe to as low as $350.

PAL said the current fiscal year is showing strong signs of financial stability despite the challenges posed by the rising cost of fuel and the killer tsunami that destroyed tourism.

The flag carrier said it was able to post more than P1 billion in profit during the first nine months of operations or from April to December 2004. PAL posted a profit of P1.01 billion from April to September 2004 or its first half of operations. PAL's fiscal year begins April 1 and ends March 31 the following year.

PAL came back in the first six months of its fiscal year and to part off in the last two quarters. Bautista picks up in December but slows down again at the start of the year. It starts to improve again in March.

PAL is confident it will make profit in the current fiscal year ending March. Bautista was appointed PAL president in August.

PhAG carrier says rebooting program.

RP halal food exports projected to double

By Konrad M. Dominguez

THE CHAMPION's halal food exports are expected to double this year to about $1.88 million, said Rahmat Hakim, president of the Islamic Da'wah Council of the Philippines (IDCP).

The projection was based on the surge in demand particularly in areas hit by the disastrous last December.

Also, the adoption of slower guidelines on the processing of halal-certified products in several Muslim countries is expected to give a big boost to Philippine halal exports.

Hakim said buyers of halal products were expected to get more from the Philippines as last year's tragedy caused increased demand especially for meat-based food.

"We have been exporting halal noodles to our neighbors even before the tsunami struck, but the continuing relief operations by those countries paved greater opportunities for our producers," Hakim said in an interview.

Also, Hakim announced that the IDCP last month signed a memorandum of agreement with Bahrain-based Agro Food Processing and Development Corp. on cooperating in the processing of chicken for the local and international market.

Halal is an Arabic word that means "permissible" and in relation to consumables, it refers to products that Muslims are allowed to use, or eat, based on the observance of taboo.

Hakim said that as for IDCP was the only Philippine organization accredited with the Jakarta-based World Halal Council.

He explained that Muslim countries, which import significant volumes of consumables, accept only the products that are halal certified by organizations accredited by the WHC.

IDCP, a federation of 95 Muslim organizations nationwide established in 1982, is also a member of the Regional Islamic Da'wah Council of Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

Under the MOA with Agro Foods, the company would provide the chicken and the abattoir while IDCP would provide Muslim workers that are trained in halal processing.

Also, IDCP will provide officials who will ensure that the plans as well as the processing of the chicken follow halal requirements. IDCP will also provide the halal certification for the products.

"Importers like the Arab countries are very strict [about halal meat products]," Hakim said. "They require three documents for the products—one each covering the state of the animals before and after they are killed and a third for the halal certification itself."

Listing of ICT firms pushed

THE GOVERNMENT a pushing for the listing in the local bourse of firms engaged in the high-growth information technology-enabled services in a bid to further develop the country's capital markets.

Outgoing Trade Secretary Cesar S. Purisima said ICT firms as well as mining companies that have not yet listed were seen as a driving force in broadening the base of the PSE.

Purisima, in his farewell business ceremony this week, made the statement amid reports that Emerging City-based eXchange Global Solutions was planning to go public through an American stock exchange.

In 2004, eXchange was reported to have been planning to list with the PSE but a company official said the firm had not made a decision on which bourse to list in.

Rod C. Ramirez, eXchange corporate communications manager, said the firm's finances were was still studying the matter but that is hoped to make a decision within the year.

eXchange has 11 call centers in two countries, with its North American operations based in Monrovia, California.

Purisima said ICT firms would be encouraged to list with the PSE, but added that it would not bar it such companies were to be listed in multiple markets.

What is important is that the financial requirements of local companies should be matched with the availability of assets rather than from bank loans, he said.

He said 90 percent of local companies' funding needs come from banks while in developed markets, bank loans account for only 20 percent.

PSE president Francis Lim said he was actively persuading companies with plans to go public to list through the PSE.

"It would be an insult to the PSE if a Philippine-based company would list in a foreign market and not here," Lim said.

"Right now there are only 230 companies listed with the PSE," Lim said. "This is a very low number."

Last Friday, the board of trustees signed a memorandum of agreement with the PSE. The deal aims to make it easier for BOI-registered firms to list in the local bourse.

The agreement seeks to implement the provision of Executive Order No. 226 or the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987, which requires BOI-registered firms to be 19-percent publicly owned within 10 years of registration.

Lim said the cooperation between the two bodies was "monumental" in that it could help widen the stock market's base.

Konrad M. Dominguez

Sun's 24/7 plan stays—NTC

Turn to page B3

ted. It has not been able to make a headway until it launched 24/7 in October. Meanwhile, it had more than doubled its subscriber base from 700,000 in September to about 1.5 million to date.

The 24/7 plan allows Sun Cellular customers to call and text within the network, without any limit, for an additional fee of P250 a month or P100 for 15 days.

Filipino Telephone Corp., a unit of Smart Communications Inc. and Innove Communications of Globe Telecom Inc. have asked the NTC separately to stop Sun Cellular from offering 24/7.

The two companies argued that Sun is violating the service performance benchmark of the NTC.

"We are pleased with the decision of the NTC in deny the requests of Smart and Globe. We have always believed that the complaints they filed have no merit," said Digital senior vice president Ferdinand Dy.

Dy also commended the NTC for protecting the interest of consumers in ensuring that free and real competition is introduced to the cellular market," he added. Smart and Globe officials could not be reached for comment.

Last week, a lawmaker called for a congressional investigation into the pricing mechanism of telecom companies after accusing Smart and Globe of behaving like a cartel that wanted to kill competition in the industry.

"I move that we investigate the current state of the telecommunications industry, the processes and dynamics of determining the rates and charges for mobile services to encourage competition, prevent monopolistic control or surveillance of the industry and to protect consumers," said Iloilo Rep. Rodolfo Alfiler in a privilege speech.

He pointed out that the Galanapagos earlier only accounts for less than 5 percent of the telephone industry will dominated by Smart with its more than 19 million subscribers and Globe's 11.5 million customers as of end-2004.

Alfiler said Sun Cellular was in no position to be the "predator" in the telephone phone industry.

"Sun Cellular has made advances that mobile phone services should not be as expensive or as costly as they are now being offered by the two dominant telecom firms," the congressman said.

NOT ENOUGH COLLECTION

BIR seen raising tax on motels

By Michelle V. Rivera

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue plans to raise the tax dragged on motel operators, believing the government is still not getting what it should from these establishments.

Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. said a team was formed to come up with a study on motel owners' investments and private establishments' income levels. The result of the study, he said, would be the basis of the adjustments that will be made on the threshold amount of their tax liabilities.

Under the presumptive taxation applied to motel owners last year, their taxable income was set using the assumption that each motel is rented by an average of 1.5 times per day.

"For some motels, four times may be more realistic," Parayno said in an interview with reporters.

Presumptive taxation, also called predictive auditing, is a system of determining one's tax liabilities using income benchmarks. This system of taxation can be applied by the BIR on hotel-to-motel owners.

Motel business is considered hotel-to-motel because clientele do not usually rent for overnight.

The BIR, had planned to computerally raise revenue collection amid the government's serious fiscal problems, decided last year to apply presumptive taxation on motels.

Parayno said that since the application of presumptive taxation on motel owners, the BIR's tax collection from this sector had generally 20 percent.

"This is already a victory for the BIR," he said.

But he added that despite the growth in tax collection, the BIR believed the government should be collecting more from this sector, Mr and the presumptive taxation using a more normative rate of 1.5 times might be too low.

The BIR said that aside from motel operators, it would also look at other hotel-to-motel sectors where presumptive taxation could be applied.

CAP: The root cause

THAT NAA quite a media blitz College Insurance Plan (CAP) wrapped last week. First, there was a full-page ad, presumably by CAP's sales agents, espousing the cause of Filipino families. The full-page ad by CAP itself was the final salvo.

CAP invented the pre-need industry. It was such a promising business that one would wonder why nobody in the whole, wide world had thought of it before. Soon, other pre-need firms sprouted like mushrooms.

Pre-need plans compared favorably with life insurance policies in that many of the life companies had to set up their pre-need subsidiaries. Even the GSIS has joined the bandwagon.

So, how come CAP is in such hot water? Financial troubles? The Securities and Exchange Commission has canceled CAP's license to sell more pre-need plans. In the meantime, between the two, the investors are losing their money.

Why is this happening? Former BIR Chief Norberto Parayno claims that CAP is a victim of a deliberately planned black ops by Sen. Mar Roxas and is a foreign pre-need firm. Maybe so, but CAP has no one else to blame but itself.

CAP and Tony stand to if the problem is just a matter of accounting. But the problem may be beyond just being able to present a good-looking financial statement.

Let us go back to the beginning. CAP started by offering the educational plan. Across the street of the time. This plan is more usually referred to as the traditional plan.

The plan was so cheap that parents gobbled it up. In 1965, my son, then-bought a plan for his son Cayo's college. The plan cost P241 monthly for five years. The gross price of P14,460 was fully paid by 1966. Incredible, the plan guaranteed to pay Cayo's tuition, no matter what the amount might be when he entered college. On top of this, if he had died within the five-year term, the plan would have been considered fully paid.

Cayo entered college in 2000. CAP paid the tuition in full and on time, every time. When he graduated last year, CAP's total payout was a staggering P1,014,948.

The plan was the best investment Joe ever made. In his own, this would not have been able to afford the same tuition from his own. GSIS and not, CAP was a big, big help in sending Cayo through college.

But Cayo's case was a complete disaster for CAP. How would CAP make P14,460 grow into P1,014,948 in 12 years, and still make a profit?

Clearly, CAP did not foresee the tremendous surge in tuition fees. The final straw/solution is the root cause of CAP's present problems. The media's reporting this final straw/solution is the root cause of CAP's present problems.

A lowly clerk in the underwriting department of a non-life insurance company would not start a minimum limit of liability. If CAP were supervised by the Insurance Commission, the terms and conditions of the plan would have been subject to the Commissioner's prior approval. Surely the eagle-eyed technical staff would have seen the plan's ominous flaws.

The traditional educational plan was withdrawn from the insurance scene ages ago. The semi-retirement plan now offered by pre-need firms has a fixed maturation time. But I suppose a large number of the 95,220 college graduates were being served by CAP is still covered under the traditional plan.

One of them is Jim's second son-in-law. The plan's gross price of P18,999 was fully paid in 1996. He has four trimesters to go before graduation.

The last trimester tuition of about P40,000 was due last month. Jim had to advance the money because CAP's check bounced. CAP told Jim that he should get a good deal by the end of next month. Pero-deal?

What's ahead for CAP? If CAP can round enough to get started in this terrible mess, it should be smart enough to get out of it.

Smart president elected to 23-man GSMA board

DAVIDSON L. Sinaneno, president and chief executive officer of Smart Communications Inc., was elected to the 23-member board of the GSM Association (GSMA) for 2004 to 2006.

GSMA, the global trade association representing the GSM industry, has more than 670 members and third-party firms includes operators and more than 140 manufacturers and suppliers that serve more than 1.2 billion customers around the world.

Founded in 1987, GSMA has played a pivotal role in the development of the GSM platform and of the global wireless industry. Its members and staff have steered the landscape of success for global mobile communications via GSM, the world's first global wireless network.

Sinaneno, who is also president and CEO of SMART parent firm Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), joins a distinguished group of international leaders in the telecommunications industry, led of Craig Ehrlich, board member of Hong Kong-based Hutchison Whampoa Limited in Hong Kong, who has been reelected GSMA board chair for 2003-2006.

"Since the restructuring of the GSMA two years ago, our board has enabled us to move forward as a source of strategic, commercial and public policy matters for the benefit of operators and their customers," said Ehrlich from a statement by GSMA. "I am looking forward to continuing the progress with our board in the new term."

PLDT launches own unlimited call plan

By Clarissa S. Batino

FOLLOWING the lead of its competitors, the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company has dropped the axe for its more than 1.1 million fixed line-and-wireless customers.

PLDT has launched its own unlimited, with-in-network promo rate of P15 for all PLDT calls anywhere in the country as well as to all Smart and Talk 'N Text mobile subscribers regardless of how long each call takes.

PLDT rivals Globe Telecom Inc. and Digitel Telecommunications Phils. Inc. are offering similar buffet pricing. Globe's Innove Communications Inc. is offering a "one country, one rate" price of P650 a month for all within-network landline calls anywhere in the country.

Also, Digitel's Sun Cellular has been offering its 24/7 plan where Gretchen, which allows subscribers unlimited call and text, within the network for an additional fee of P250 a month or P100 for 10 days.

Manuel Pangilinan, head of PLDT's retail group said the flat P50 promo rate was designed to encourage the use of landline telephone units and allow the telecom giant to gain more subscribers.

"Major independent phone companies in the provinces and PLDT subsidiaries and affiliates such as PLDT Clark Telecom Inc., Subic Telecommunications Company Inc. and PLDTMaratel Inc. are also included," Pangilinan said. "All told, the plan is open to over 20 million subscribers—a base no other phone company can provide."

In the last 4 years, PLDT said it had lost about 250,000 customers who opted to avail themselves of wireless plans.

Before the new P50 promo, PLDT charged P5 per minute for national direct distance or NDD calls and P15.75 per minute for calls to mobile phones.

"PLDT fixed line subscribers now have to pay only P50 per call regardless of how long the call takes," said Pangilinan.

He explained that the new pricing scheme follows the P50 daily flat rate that PLDT offered only during Christmas and New Year's day.

"We expect an increase in new subscribers from these affordable call plans that we have initiated," said Pangilinan.

"The results of our earlier tests proved encouraging," the PLDT executive added. "Yet we are again launching a promo that will make HDD calls, and calls to Smart and Talk 'N Text, even more affordable."

He said that with the new rate, PLDT should be on track to reverse that trend and start registering a net gain of subscribers for 2005.

PLDT's Smart and Talk 'N Text have more than 19 million subscribers, while fixed line customers number more than 2 million.

Pangilinan said reconnection figures looked promising for PLDT. In 2004, only 32 percent of those temporarily disconnected requested reconnection. In 2003, 38 percent sought reconnection.

In 2004, reconnection rate went up to 50 percent. For 2005, PLDT is targeting a reconnection rate of over 70 percent...according to Pangilinan.

"One of our main objectives in the retail business group is to make the landline relevant again to our subscribers...our recent moves seem responsive as we in the right direction," he said.

Recently, PLDT also drove down the price of its fast-speed, dial-up service to a promo monthly plan of P999.

PLDT "Plus would provide more than 99 hours of Internet use monthly.

"The subscriber speaks of our new Vibe plans has been overwhelming," said Pangilinan.

"If there is one thing that will make it's PLDT subscribers keep 'on' landlines, it will be access to the Internet," he said. "So this strategy allows us to be successful on two fronts... generating additional revenue and keeping our landline subscribers hooked."

BSP seeks mandate to raise penalties for erring banks

By Doris C. Dumlao

DAVAO-Several top Filipino Governor Rafael Buenaventura is asking lawmakers to give the BSP the mandate to impose a tenfold hike on the minimum fine for erring banks - from the current P10,000 to P100,000.

Reacting to a criticism from Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile that the BSP had penalized British bank Standard Chartered Bank with only P50,000 after the bank sanctioned its three suspended executives for unregistered securities, Buenaventura said the BSP needed clearer amendments to be able to raise the monetary penalties.

"That's exactly what we're asking them ... to increase the monetary penalties per transaction to P500,000," Buenaventura said.

The figure represents the maximum amount of fine the BSP can dispose violation of any banking regulations, as well as the minimum daily fine for every day of violation until it is remedied.

In a recent privilege speech, Enrile who is also vice chair of the Senate's committee on banks and financial institutions, accused Standard Chartered of selling unregistered securities which were "high-risk foreign currency fund securities, falsely advertised and marketed to ally investment haven for our foreign residents and local nationals."

Buenaventura said the BSP had indeed found out that the sale of the securities were illegal, but it was authorized by its charter to slap only P50,000 in fines. He also said Standard Chartered had stopped selling the securities when the BSP found out that these were illegal.

The BSP chief said there was a need to jack up the measly fines to curb violations of banking regulations.

In a recent hearing at the Senate on the proposed BSP charter amendments, Buenaventura said the petition for higher penalties did not sit well with some lawmakers.

He said the rebels were concerned that the higher penalties could be abused by unscrupulous BSP officials.

Moratorium on service contracts urged

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy wants to impose a moratorium on new petroleum, geothermal and coal service contract applications beginning May 31 to prepare for the launch of the Oil Exploration Promotion and Contracting Round.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez said in a statement that, should the moratorium be implemented, only contract applications received before May 31 would be processed.

The DOE hopes that the Second Philippine Contracting Round (PCR-2), an event that is geared toward the development of the country's petroleum, geothermal and coal resources, would be as successful as last year's PCR-1.

Perez said that as a result of PCR-1, the DOE likely would soon award the petroleum service contracts to seven firms led by Australian natural gas firm BHP Billiton Petroleum.

The consortium had submitted bids to explore parts of the Southwest Palawan.

For PCR-2, the DOE has identified several areas off West Palawan, Sulu Sea and other sites to be offered to potential investors for exploration and development.

Also, the DOE's First Geothermal Bidding Round (Geothermal 1) held last year resulted in bid offers from three firms for the development of two geothermal sites in the country.

Two companies proposed to develop the Energy Development Corp.'s Mt. Apo in Soccsargen, while another firm wanted to undertake the optimization of the Philippine National Oil Co. Energy Development Corp.'s Southern Negros geothermal field in Mindanao.

For the second geothermal contracting round, the DOE would be offering areas in Bicol, Batangas, Camiguin, Biliran, Bohol and Mindoro Oriental to prospective investors.

Because of the high-risk and high-cost nature of petroleum exploration, the DOE is inviting foreign firms to participate in the business.

Profit-taking . . .

From page B1

within historical average figures of about $1 billion or so. He don't think it bodes ill for the economy unless it becomes a trend," an analyst from a local brokerage firm said.

In terms of corporate earnings, among those that reported last week was Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. (Metrobank), which said its consolidated income for the year 2004 jumped 22.2 percent compared to the previous year.

Net income of the country's bank crashed P7.6 billion in 2004, an increase of more than P611.3 million from P1 billion in 2003. The improvement in net income was largely due to the strengthening of the bank's core business.

San Miguel Corp., the country's biggest food and beverage firm, also said it earned P8.08 billion last year, upwards 18 percent from P7.4 billion in 2003. Last year, consolidated operating income grew more than 20 percent due to higher domestic and international beer volumes.

Property stocks were also higher last week, such as Megaworld Corp., Filinvest Land Inc. and Ayala Land. First Philippine Holdings Corp. was also among the top traded after reports that unit Manila North Tollways Corp. took over the operations of the North Luzon Expressway. (Elizabeth L. Angeles

DOF bucks bill. . .

From page B1

the principle behind this, considering the low savings rate in the country, but that the scheme should be implemented after the government has solved the deficit problem.

The DOF also stated the concern that people might withdraw their existing savings account into from two mutual funds of the bank to finance the incentive, and therefore defeat the purpose of improving the country's poor savings rate.

Government documents showed that national savings rate in the Philippines stood at only 23 percent of gross domestic product in 2002.

The figure compared poorly with Singapore's 52 percent, Malaysia's 48.1 percent, China's 38.5 percent, Thailand's 30.1 percent, Hong Kong's 30 percent, and South Korea's 30 percent.

In 2000, the savings rate rose even projected to have dwindled to only 14 percent of GDP.

The Surigao Several ng Pilipinas said improving the savings rate in the country was vital to developing the domestic capital market. With more savings, comes more investment activities, it said.

The BSP together with private banks, is working on the development of the capital market through the creation of a fixed-income exchange (FIX). FIX, which is targeted to be launched as soon as next month, will be an open market for debt instruments, the purpose of which is to promote investment.

With this view, the BSP is pushing for the immediate passage of the Peso bill because it will complement efforts to develop the capital market.

Under Sen. Ralph Recto's version of the bill, contributions to IRAs shall be 100 percent deductible from one's taxable income.

Social responsibility of the mining industry

By Fidel V. Ramos
Former President
of the Republic of the Philippines

HAMER working as an underground miner/driller.

HISTORICALLY, we Filipinos have been a poor people sitting on a fortune. We've been granted our archipelago mineral resources in abundance. Potentially, we could be the world's fifth largest mineral producer.

Pres's challenge is for us to turn this national endowment into material wealth under the principle of sustainable development adopted by the Philippine government by its ratification in September 1992 of the United Nations covenants of the Rio Summit of June 1992, otherwise known as Earth Agenda 21. That challenge we Filipinos have—until now—failed to meet.

In 2003, mining accounted for only 1.3 percent of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and only 1.8 percent of our exports. That is scarce in that mining employed directly no more than 130,000 of our workforce of some 30 million people.

Mining Act of 1995

In my short remarks as President at the signing on March 3, 1995, of Republic Act No. 7942—now better known as the Philippine Mining Act of 1995—I emphasized the following:

"Today also, we establish a framework for the mining industry as we sign into law this bill which updates the provisions of the last mining act passed in 1936. This new law will revitalize the Philippine mining industry by it becomes back as a competitive advantage in our bid to join the most progressive economies of Asia and as a safety net for the over half-a-million Filipinos engaged in mining.

"To be competitive calls for an export and investment-led strategy—which are the main concerns of the mining industry. The abundance of Philippine minerals can guarantee a steady supply for the foreign market while we are assured that enough is left for domestic use under a conservative policy based on reasonable discretion.

"This law becomes the go-signal for the return of foreign capital into mining. Many investors have signified interest in our mining industry but have waited for the passage of more equitable and globally competitive tax arrangements. The law addresses these by providing for four kinds of agreements available to investors as well as fiscal and other incentives for the mining companies, including foreign-owned ones.

"Of importance, too, are the provisions that call for sound responsibility on the part of mining companies and for environmental protection and sustainable development of our resources. The social component will bring livelihood jobs and social development to mining communities and contiguous localities. The protection of the environment is assured by rehabilitation measures, highlighted by the mandate to establish the Mines Rehabilitation Fund (MRF) to restore mining-affected areas to pristine conditions.

"The passage of this law is the best of proof mined and private sector cooperation. We recognize the constant collaboration particularly of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (CMP) which is composed of representatives of various mining companies. With this law, therefore, we are confident that Philippine mining will regain its stature as one of the major contributors of foreign exchange."

PERSPECTIVE

Out of Poverty

Whatever the critics may say, the only way to get people out of poverty permanently is to give them jobs and livelihood, any other solution, no matter how well-intended, is merely palliative.

Yet, if we are to begin reducing mass poverty among our people, we need to grow our lean total 10-12 years, by a minimum of 7 percent annually. And if we are to aspire by 7 percent, we need to re-invest at least 30 percent of our GDP every year.

But, on average, we Filipinos save only 19 percent of our GDP—much less than any of our neighbors in a comparable level of development. Even Indonesia and Vietnam save far more of their GDP than we do. This simple arithmetic tells us why foreign investment is so crucial to our economy. It also justifies government's efforts to rejuvenate our mining industry—which is certainly one of our few remaining comparative advantages in today's competitive world.

From the '50s to the early '80s, the Philippines was almost always ranked among the top five gold-producing countries of the world; from the mid-'80s to the early '90s, we were always among the world's top 10 copper-, chromite- and nickel-producing countries.

There was the time when in one year, the mining industry accounted for 10 percent of the gross domestic product and 20 percent of the country's export trade. This was an unusual feat for a country with a land area only about the size of the State of Arkansas.

All told, the past recalls to us that mining was a major component of the national economy and a powerful source of much-needed dollars. It is one right against poverty. And as the Philippines pursues the path of economic and social progress, we have to mining once more as an industry to be strengthened in our efforts to develop sustainably and moderately.

Mining will create skilled jobs where they are most needed—in our resource hinterlands, while royalties will give local government units a healthy source of financial support. Although the industry has never been a big direct employer—being largely equipment-intensive—it has widespread multiplier effects. For every job created in the industry, four or five indirect jobs are generated in upstream or downstream sectors.

Regional, global context

Mining is uniquely different from other industries, because aside from its macroeconomic contributions—its potential to export earnings, generate investments, employment and community development—mining provides the raw materials basic to human civilization.

From toothpaste to eyeglasses and toilet bowls, to bathrobes, computers and most industrial and commercial products, mining provides the materials whose end products sustain and protect life. Any country, therefore, that produces minerals to benefit not only its people but all of mankind possesses a noble endowment.

Europe by the period 1941-1945 during the Second World War, the period from the mid-'80s in the early '90s may be considered the darkest age of the Philippine mining industry. Low metal prices, high operating costs mainly brought about by the oil-price hikes, and its political instability took their toll on the industry. With the lack of capital and worsening peace and order problems in a number of important minerals, the industry hit rock bottom in 1990.

In contrast, other countries in the Asean—notably oil Southeast Asian Countries (Asean) saw their new mining industries emerging as frontliners of their economies during the same period. For this reason, I ordered the creation of a Special Task Force in 1993 to inspect the status and to take steps to reestablish the vital role that the Philippine mining industry plays in nation building.

A Ramos administration bill—Republic Act No. 7729, passed in June 1994, which sought to reduce the excise tax for mineral products—started the ball rolling. It

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso
Selection Editor Lito B. Zulueta

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY ZEST • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

Philippine history seen through Santa Cruz district in Manila

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

ANNA Maria L. Harper in her book "Santa Cruz Church, A Living Heritage" meticulously chronicles the development of the Sta. Cruz district in Manila from a sleepy 16th-century agricultural backwater to its present status as one of the premier commercial hubs of Manila.

Although the book's title focuses on Sta. Cruz Church, Harper places the church in the context of its surrounding district, and rightly so, since construction of public edifices especially churches is the result of collaboration among its users, parishioners and priests, a reflection on the lifestyle, economics and religiosity of the people.

Sta. Cruz church is the outcome of such collaboration, a structure reflecting the development of the Sta. Cruz lifestyle. The church architecturally reveals the district's history. Originally a wooden structure built by the Augustinians in the early 17th century, it became a stone church in the 18th century, then expanded a commercial center, until World War II fractured it. It was reconstructed after the war.

"The story of the parish of Sta Cruz begins in the 1580s when Jesuit novice Fr. Antonio Sedeño, went searching for land outside Intramuros that could be cultivated for the support of the College of Manila," Harper writes, adding that the priest would never have imagined that the land would develop into the rich and powerful district of Sta. Cruz.

Towards the mid-18th century trade Chinese tenants of Jesuit farms intermarried with Filipinas. Their children, known as mestizo Sangleys, grew to become painters, sculptors of ivory, silversmiths and jewelers, giving the district an identity as the center for artistic and craftsmen.

Despite the British invasion of 1762 and the Jesuit expulsion in 1768, Sta. Cruz prospered. Residents replaced the original wooden church with a stone church to mark their status. The surviving tower from the 18th century is now the oldest part of the present church.

By the 19th century, Sta. Cruz took on an urbanized and cosmopolitan ambiance. It developed into a business center, with warehouses next to Pasig River near spacious residences of local and foreign businessmen that could be reached either by land or through the network of canals that flowed through Binondo and Quiapo down.

In the mid-19th century, Sta Cruz flourished with mansions such as the Manotoc house-on-Calle Anloague depicted by Rizal in "Noli Me Tangere." Harper describes the lifestyle of the era in vivid detail, tracing the growth of the district, its notable personages, and the establishments that arose in the area.

Mixed neighborhoods developed, "of residences and commercial establishments... some buildings were designed as accessories—rows of attached dwellings in a block—that housed stores on the ground floor and the shopkeeper's family on the upper floor.

"There were theaters, like Teatro Libertad on Calle Oroquieta, that specialized in movie-stores, while others, like the Zorilla, present-ed operas. There were ateliers of artists and stores run by Chinese, Europeans, government officials and even a jail."

The American colonial period changed Sta Cruz. From a living purely residential neighborhood, it became a commercial district with restaurants, theaters and other commercial establishments multiplying. The Manila City Beautiful plan by architect Daniel Burnham expanded Escolta from an Avenida Rizal, which became the new "downtown" of Manila.

Avenida Rizal quickly became Manila's entertainment and shopping area, anchored by Ideal Theater on Plaza Goiti. Soon after, it was punctuated by a row of movie theaters like the Avenue and Hoyt and many others.

These were the "Empire Days" of rapid change. English was being taught in newly opened schools. Business transferred from Binondo to Sta. Cruz. Many of the well-to-do

(continued on 11)

THE CHURCH architecturally records the district's history.

ACCESSIBLE still the 1-Sta. Cruz Street.

The DPWH has assured that the old houses of Baclayon in Bohol wouldn't be demolished. But heritage vigilantes must keep guard

"HOUSE of House"

BATIK and Wayang dioramas

A volcano of colors

Text by Constantino C. Tejero
Photos by August de la Cruz

THE ART of Pacita Abad has long been associated with her colors and myriad media. Pacita who? Even the late artist says it is only reflective of her offbeat nature and idiosyncrasies together.

National Museum of the Philippines director Gemma Alviola, in her lecture during the "Farewell for Pacita Abad" on the occasion of the 40th day after the artist's passing, said Abad's art found "full-bodied expression in color, texture and...they are only another" to what had become her signature technique.

Abad's tropisms sit, in which shapes and images are studied, sketched, painted on and over, lifted, has been inspired by the traditional fields of quilting, embroidering and stitching. Pregnant is simply balloon-like "quilt."

Using mixed media ranging from paper, textile and acrylic to plastic bubble, ceramic shards, mirror, sequins, metal and thread, Abad has transformed this Western craft into neo-ethnic and hence universally Oriental.

Working in over 86 countries from Latin America to Africa, she assimilated the indigenous cultures of the various ethnic societies she lived in, and thus imparted nearby Third World identities in her art. Even the ceramic dinnerware she created however whose colors show the Indonesian wayang puppets and the design motifs of batik.

The result is a mix of textures and hues, an art that's seemingly wild but is really very disciplined, each piece rigorously composed and finally exalted. What appear like random strokes and sweeps, patterns could be rigid designs and textile, both secular and sacred, as well as an expression of the artist's undercurrent, an oneiric or personality.

Issues and evolution

And though art isn't just adornment, either, in the years of curating Abad's works, Alviola remembered seeing "issues of immigration, images of Philippine exiled nurses, environmental responsibility."

This can best be appreciated in the whimsical exhibit of a selection of Abad's art, personal papers, interviews and memorabilia in Paseo de Taseco Room, 4/F, Rizal Library Building, Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City. Presented by the dynamic library of Ateneo's Philippiniana Pacita, the exhibit runs until Feb. 17.

Here are 10 artworks and a sampling of the artist's limited-edition "Wayang and Batik" dioramas. In fact, though small, the exhibit is a fair sampling of Abad's oeuvre, showing the evolution of her art from representational to abstract.

The earliest is a conventional painting, "Women in Bangladesh," a social realist piece in oil on paper.

This is followed by two genre works: "Women of the World," a study in oil on canvas, and "Peasant of Luzon Gray," a society portrait in acrylic on paper.

The exquisite technique first appears in elongated figurative expressionist piece flirting with abstraction: "House of House," oil on canvas, stitched with beads, shells, buttons, glass, yarn and padded cotton.

Whole motifs appear in two pieces. The paper collage "Untitled" features an African mask cutout colorfully painted.

In "Batita and Mimita," in acrylic and batik stitched on padded canvas, the artist transformed her driver Batita and housemaid Mimi into characters from the "Ramayana." (The incredible resonance of the stitching effects an illusion of stereo, demonstrates Abad's craftsmanship.)

"POLKA Dots Stripes"

Adornment and identity

The last four pieces are full-scale abstraction incorporates "Oh I Forgot You," "Mixed-media assisted paper pulp on handmade 3PPI paper; "Labradas Girl," 24-color paper pulp, mirror and buttons on shaped handmade paper;

"Polka Dots Stripes," oil and acrylic, cotton, sequins, printed fabric and painted paper on handmade paper; "Rolling Stones," acrylic, glitter and painted cardboard cut, taped on handmade paper.

These four were among the 20 prints and paper-pulp pieces exhibited with "O Oh-woman" paintings in "Garden in My Mind" in the Cultural Center of the Philippines late last year. It was Abad's first exhibit in her homeland since she was still alive. And here, many the adornments have its pure, ideas revalled the artist telling her she liked using buttons because they reminded her of Filipinos.

"They are both numerous, variously shaped, multi-sided colored," explained Mirna. "Both are everywhere and can adapt and blend in, to stand out, or fall off through body-rubbing and wear-wearing. Filipinos and buttons have potentials for different roles and functions. Buttons—and Filipinos—can also be cute (very) cuddly, appear to disappear (even as they add to the ornate of one, pattern, and to that of life wherever the Filipino chooses to be."

Abad took up Political Science in University of the Philippines and was an activist in the days of the Marcos dictatorship. She had intended to pursued to law school in Madrid, then in the United States, but when she stopped off in San Francisco, she was inspired by art.

She lived for a time in Knight-Ashbury at the peak of Flower Power, and that must have been when her mind-blowing art backdrop's born.

"MAMA and Mimita"

"PORTRAIT of Linda Cruz"

"WOMAN in Bangladesh"

"UNTITLED"

"OH Happy Day!"

Pacita's home and garden living featured in Metro Home

THE ARTIST's living room in Singapore is a burst of hues and neo-ethnic motifs.

THE NEWEST issue of Metro Home & Entertaining brings the outdoors in, exploring homes that have stylishly incorporated nature as a key design element.

On the cover is a breezy action garden adjacent to the bedroom of architect Gerry Contreras. It is a luxurious oasis in the heart of the city. There is also the suburban residence of a banker, a sprawling garden nature with open, traditional Filipino-style entertainment complementing a nostalgic idyll.

Philanthropist Trina Lopez Ilan is home of similar openness but in a more modern idiom, a round home atop a hill. The country home of native Pampanena Consuelo Aldaba Pallad homage of the gorgeous natural backdrop it performs surrounded by lotus-filled ponds.

The latest also features the Singapore home of the late Pacita Abad, the well-known and much admired artist. The residence is truly remarkable, infused with her vibrant and colorful creativity.

The entertaining section celebrates the

ASIAN painting of Indonesian puppet in a scene of her home.

ne cocktails, and shows how quick and convenient Chinese takeout can be transformed into a memorably elegant dinner party.

Metro Home & Entertaining is a quarterly of ABS-CBN Publishing. It is available at leading bookstores and newsstands nationwide.

Call 911-5801.

LIFESTYLE

She paints the colors of déjà vu

ARTIST Maria Ballao

Deeply influenced by Chinese painting, she paints by memory

By Pablo A. Tariman
Cover Feature

MARIVIC Ballao deals with different worlds and cope with different roles. She is an artist who continues to evolve.

She has painted for over a decade. She writes a regular column for the Business World. She does her bit as wife of Central Bank Governor Rafael Buenaventura, and, when time allows, she produces a concert here and abroad.

So, if she would divide the stages of her life, the chronicle would be pre-and post-Bb. Governor Rafael Buenaventura.

"Of course, I became less prolific when I became Mrs. Buenaventura," she admits. "I have to take care of a husband who is always under stress because of the nature of his work. I travel with him a lot to attend international conferences, and I have always some ups and downs because of his medical checkups and surgery. That absorbed a lot of my strength and my time."

But in those travels, she actually absorbs art. "I was actually absorbing all the impressions of the places we went through," she says. "I was doubly fascinated by the lights of Paris, sunsets in some Mediterranean cities and scenes in some Middle East cities."

Subsequently her previous year as an artist?

"It was a time when I was more like one morning confessionals or procrastinating because I was busy with my role as wife of the Central Bank governor. We had to move to hotels and I couldn't paint somewhere. I wanted to. I guess I was just babbling inside and all of a sudden there is this overall burst of emotion of color, and before I knew it, I was busy with my art again."

Two years ago, she joined a group exhibit in Deja with the likes of Santos and Nena Saguil and the experience doubly nourished her as an artist.

A few weeks before the opening of "Luminiscence: Reminiscences 2005" (Feb. 21-27), where she is exhibiting 25 works at Manila Peninsula, she allows herself what she calls a time-flowing dialogue with her friends who are curious to her evolution as an artist.

If Ballao's come three years since her last show and she takes notice of some changes in her life. She likes to think those changes are reflected in her new works.

Changes

She's the: "There changes are expressed in brighter colors, with more fluid lines and some of them fleshed out becoming abstracts. The colors are more intense wherever I used to paint with pastel hues and very pastel. Of course, I still have paintings capturing that mood. I also have very intense shapes now."

Sometimes her eyes, she gifted her husband with large outdoor murals has opened the works to new horizons viewing. "It was actually an extension of my work done in a (snowboarding style, but it was still me and there is a lot of freedom there."

A fascinating aspect of this exhibit is that some of her works were done with her eight-year-old grandson, Ryan.

He has actually seen her work since the boy was an infant and so has absorbed some of her style.

Three of those works they painted together. "The set is a large painting in the show in one of my dreamscapes and he painted part of the sailboats in the bottom and part of the foreground. It's been fun. My exhibit at Sun shows us a way and inside more fun because the extensions of the art found their way in dividers and chairs and fabrics as part of the exhibit."

She gets more out of that connection with a younger generation. "I think it brings out the child in me and, in a sense, we were both kids when we did it. We is a child of art and that makes us children of an altogether."

In turn, Marivic has a good command of her creative tools.

She doesn't paint on the spot, and, deeply influenced by Chinese painting, she paints by memory. And so she paints impressions of different moods and places and emotions stored in capturing bulbs she has in her head. "It's like remembering the flowers," she explains.

"My sense of déjà vu is still there, and the touch painting of so long ago but in a different rhythm. It is quite spiritual."

LIFESTYLE

NATIONAL ARTIST RACE ON

Manuel Rodriguez Sr. in much awaited homecoming

By Glen Donaldo
Contributor

FIRST, the good news. We have been tipped off by a most reliable source that Manuel Rodriguez Sr. is definitely coming home after many years of living as an expatriate in New York, United States.

We were told that Mang Manny, as he is fondly called, has dual citizenships. So whether to spend the remaining years of his life in his country, in the company of friends and associates who still remember the golden years of printmaking.

The bad news is that the homecoming trip may not be as easy as it seems for the acknowledged father of Printmaking. Now in his mid-90s, Rodriguez Sr. has been using the eyes and the talented retrospective of his lifetime work may not even take place at all.

The manager, Eva Fiscarelas, wife of the playwright Alfred Fiscarelas, who is also based in New York, is still finishing the crate on the old trunk and the book has been plagued by endless delays.

MAUI, Hello as much as immigrants

"IDIOBOT Warrior," by Manuel Rodriguez Sr.

Many of Mang Manny's works have been marked in the bodegs of an art dealer, presumably in bad shape and in dire need of a massive cleanup. The problem is merely logistical. No one has offered to pick up the tab for the trip, the book and the show.

The good news is Rodriguez may get to become National Artist, says local backs, whose group, the Printmakers Association of the Philippines (PAP), has nominated him.

As to be expected in the usual mix, there are many nominees with personal contenders Diosdado Lorenzo, Francisco V. Coching and Larry Alcala, who are all gone, still vying for the nod.

Add the names of Edmundo Cordilla, nominated by the Art Association of the Philippines, and Ben Cabrera, a shoo-in for the country's highest honors, and we have a truly formidable field this year.

Holding dual citizenships, the Father of Printmaking has been nominated to the Order of National Artists

Also deserving

Isidro also deserves to be nominated for National Artist. He has been at the helm of the PAP for several terms now, and it is, hands down, the country's best art group, both in track record and its laudable projects.

A teacher and former dean at Philippine Women's University, he has been a constant source of inspiration to fellow artists, especially those who have held on to their medium despite the lure of painting and mixed media.

Through Isidro has also been engaged in various media, he has worked hard to promote the fine art of printmaking, particularly serigraphy, print, in the country. His most laudable project is the nationwide tour of Bulawog Lineleg, which has been to 12 different sites across the archipelago in the last two years, teaching aspiring printmakers how to use the medium (with the help of portable presses the PAP check spoil) and learn the various techniques of the graphic arts.

Isidro is considering in pursuing the association's avowed goal of developing a new generation of printmakers, which he believes is the most appropriate machine for the country. He is personally committed to educate the public in the medium even as he is continuing to evolve as artist.

Now in his 60s, he still keeps a rigorous working schedule. An earnest paedagogue and his art always exciting and profound.

For feedback, e-mail author at glenmondo@yahoo.com

LIFESTYLE

'The group must be small and intimate so they can get to know one another... We want to help the next generation'

HOWARD LOPPER
Rondalla Ensemble

The young musicians' hour

By Amanda Mia Guerrero
Contributor
Photos by Kike Calvento

"WHEREVER I go, I see Filipino musicians. They're everywhere, they're all over the world. And they're so talented," enthused Thailand's Chalermwee Charoenwee, a cultural exchange director of the Asia Foreign Foundation.

"And that is why," she added, "the French have decided to hold its first Asia Europe Music Camp here in the Philippines."

Specifically, at the National Arts Center (NAC) in Sta. Mesa Heights, Laguna. The NAC shares the campsite, which is located on a scenic slope overlooking Laguna de Bay, with the Philippine High School for the Arts (PHSA).

The recently concluded Music Camp brought together young instrumentalists and composers from Belgium, China, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, South Korea, Lithuania, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, and Thailand.

The artistic director of the Music Camp was Robert Casteels, a Singapore-based Belgian composer and conductor, with Filipino composer-conductor Chino Toledo as the resident artistic director.

"We train young artists," said Charoenwee. "The group must be small and intimate so they can get to know one another. We work with universities and ask them to nominate participants. We want to help the next generation, we want to nurture young talent."

TURN TO PAGE E2

YOUNG performers in "Pandaysan sa Palanublion"

CCP outreach program marks 25 years

By James R Ong
Contributor

TOLENTINO and Tadungan Program of the Cultural Center of the Philippines recently celebrated its 25th year with three major affairs, titled "Pilak," in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

In the Visayas, the affair was held in Iloilo, with some assistance from Cebu Pacific and Smart. The three-day affair also saw the kick-off of the commercial anniversary of host campus Central Philippine University. The highlight of the event was "Pandaysan sa Palanublion" (Journey to Heritage), a two-hour grand musical spectacle participated in by 12 groups from all over the Visayan region, with over 150 performers.

The musical depicts the symbolic journey of teenager Sofi "from cultural alienation and estrangement to recognition and acceptance of his cultural realities."

Raised by his aunt, conservative grandmother, Sofi runs away from home and joins friends in a pleasure trip that takes him to key Visayan provinces, each afforded to an either the Island of Penance (Boracay), of Prosperity (Cebu), of Submission (Camiguin) and of Invincible (Panay). In the end, he learns that there is no way he can escape his cultural identity.

The solo was ably played by Carl Anthony Delino, a second year high school student under Iloilo National High School's special program for the arts.

Also "for tomorrow, when asked the musical said it was sewing together by the composer, "the most resilient type of folk ballad" that is also native to the Visayas. Gamboa said she wrote the musical with the goal of "offering the idea that we have a rich heritage and that being a member of the new generation doesn't mean shunning tradition."

In his usual cultural crusade, CCP artistic director Fernando Josef praised the event and said he was more than convinced the Visayan are world-class artists. He also warned of the negative effect of globalization: "Local culture has become endangered."

He told the participants to continue being proud of Filipino traditions and to never stop believing in the greatness of our people. He also encouraged theater groups and cultural workers in "the arts that serves people, not for commercial instincts, for art must be relevant."

Josef also called on the different art sectors—visual and performing—to unite as a sector in order to professionalize the industry.

The CCP Outreach Program was formed in 1979 to develop and bring arts beyond the confines of the CCP complex in Manila. It was mandated to provide quality cultural performances to the widest geographical reaches possible.

Through the years, the outreach program, despite changes in leadership and priorities, has kept firm on that goal, and made it more relevant to the current situation.

One of its more important plans now is to come up with strategies to ensure a considerable artistic and cultural development. "We must do something so we can get real income and be able to raise our family through the practice of art," said Josef.

A SCENE from "Pugot ng Pilac," CCP's entry in the National Theater Festival, and considered as one of the best plays of 2004

Bountiful theater from Gantimpala

GANTIMPALA Theater Foundation (GTF) marks its 27th season as a theater company with an established reputation for plays that educate and entertain at the same time.

The company continues to produce its four classics, musical plays, National Artists series and Theaterfest productions on its own, without support from the government or corporate-sponsorships.

For the month of February, GTF celebrates the National Arts Month with its twin-bill offerings of plays devoted to two short stories written by National Artists for Literature: Nick Joaquin's "May Day Eve" and Dr. Alejandro Roces' "Sikreto Siopao Cook." (now known as Super Manok).

The plays will run February 11 (Friday), February 12 and 13, (two 12nn/3pm) and February 27 (Friday 2pm) at the AFP Theater in Quezon City. Both plays are written for the stage by Jose Mario Torres under the direction of GTF President and Artistic Director Tony E. Espejo.

Starring in the production are Bodjie Pascua, Angie Ferro, Adrian Agcaoili, Hazel Ruyra, Ruby Ruiz, Bobby Bright, Raul Ochi, and Jerry David.

The 27th season is also milestone for GTF as it has done over 100 performances of all its productions alone, specifically Rainer (Noli Me Tangere), El Filibusterismo, Florante at Laura, Ibong Adarna, Pepe Ja Pilar, the Theaterfest productions of Ang Tabanog ni Bernarda Alba and Lam-ang and the midnight musical play Cinderalaya.

These plays have been shown to more than half a million private and public high schools from Aparri, Manila and the provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Dumaguete and Catanduanes.

After the National Artists Production Series, GTF will hold its Summer Workshops from April 4 to May 14.

Call 3289032/3063893 or write to Gantimpala Theater Foundation, 2/F Open-Air Auditorium, Center of the Park, Loreta, Manila.

CCP recital of new composer

GABRIELLE San Pedro Rojas, grandson of the late National Artist Lucio D. San Pedro, will play his original compositions in a graduation recital at the CCP's Tanghalang Nicanor Abelardo on Feb. 19 at 8 p.m.

Titled "Ode to Maestro Lucio D. San Pedro," the concert will feature Rojas' works on piano with voice and violin, band, film music and chorus to be conducted by the Bulacan National Symphonic Band (MMSU) along with Cherise Philippines under choirmaster Joy Nilo, the UP Manila Chorale, the Coro de San Sebastian, and the Saint Paul College Choir. Featured soloists are soprano Ria Luisa Javier and baritone Lionel Cortez.

The highly-acclaimed ADHR, will also perform stirring marches, waltzes and overtures composed in honor of the late musical master.

The concert's highlight is the "Hong Tayo Ni ang Lubi Ma Aking Bayan," a piece for band, chorus and baritone which is inspired by one of the celebrated poems of National Artist for Literature Amado V. Hernandez.

GABRIELLE San Pedro Rojas

A student of Prof. Alfredo Buenaventura at the San Isabel College, Rojas is a full-scholar of the late Engineer Buenaventura and a former member of the Ateneo.

Fresh Symphony Orchestra under Paul Starllo Manalo. A conductor of the ADHR, he is heir to the Maestro's musical obligations in his honor-years of Auguste and custodian of San Pedro's compositions.

The concert also marks the 92nd birth anniversary of the late National Artist.

Admission is free. Call 8535-2661/555.

The young musicians' hour

One of the criteria to find the young musician or composer must be fluent in English. Among the objectives of the Music Camp are to hone the talents of the participants, and to get them to appreciate cultures of other member countries.

During a press luncheon on the first day participants performed on the native instruments of their countries: Thailand's famous bamboo on the pitted wood instrument, Norway's Jo Ann Rimcan the harp, guest concerto instrument; Ireland's Sile Denver on the Irish harp; and Spain's Roberto Olivares on the drum.

And there were the Nonduda Ensemble and the Ateneo Ensemble, with their gongs and wooden flutes, of the PSSSA.

The week was filled with activities for the participants, including workshop sessions, reading sessions, workshops on the use his instruments, rehearsals, attendance at concert in Metro Manila, and evening night out in Bonnefine Cityn, Makati.

One of the delegates is Chinese composer Shen Ye, 27, who is a graduate of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. He showed us his new composition, "Shades of Opera II: Two Silhouettes".

The work is influenced by traditional Chinese opera. The first part featured an qing Xi, "the demure young female," while the second part was about Chou, "a brilliant character type."

The tomorrow were Western, as to do we say, "Chinese compositions never have Western sensations," Shen pointed out. "But for Chinese instruments, the notation is Chinese."

"Two Silhouettes" was one of seven original compositions presented at the culminating concert on Feb. 6 at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, which featured the creative output of the participants.

The others were "Entering Jerusalem" by Nilo Alcala of the Philippines; "Scene" by Gonzalo Lourenco of Portugal; "Air Hostess" by Sanjeev Goh of Singapore; and three by the Philippines' Bob Jesse "Nonduda," "Hanyang pa," and "Unfolding Key Dreams."

The next venue of the annual event will be Ireland.

CHILDREN'S CHOIR and participants take down one for a souvenir shot.

SILE Denver of Ireland plays with her Irish harp.

ROBERT Olivares of Spain performs with Kim Yu-jin of Korea.

THE MIN look of Arcadia Park

STA. CRUZ Church

Philippine history seen through . . .

Pantaggala

ancestral estate in Quiapo or the confusing dialects of Malate. Events such as what eventually became Quezon City.

Sta. Cruz kept up with all of the changes happening in the country. Harper recounts how each change had an impact on the district's dwellers and businesses.

Harper writes facts, not nostalgia. She successfully builds on accurate historical facts, presenting them in a great narrative that reveals details with. Cruz own foundations, tracing the evolution of its residents' lives from being farmers, then to craftsmen, and finally to entrepreneurs.

She backdrops their lives with their surroundings, an agricultural suburb of Manila that developed into an urban-economic center in the late 19th century then flowering into pre-eminence as a residential, business, and entertainment district during the American colonial period until World War II.

Harper ends her chronicle of Sta. Cruz during World War II: "On March 3, 1945, a Manila Out was inaccurate—described by the military authorities as the second most devastated city after Warsaw—was liberated.

"For quaint, original, one of medieval churches, shaded avenues of acacias, labyrinthine of promenades and lighthearted banyan-studded barrios, buried in the ruins of her buildings, leave to ashes with the bodies of the 100,000 Filipinos slaughtered in that fateful February holocaust."

Ending her narrative of Sta. Cruz district with the destruction of Manila was an inspired and merciful decision, sparing the writer from having to write about the insufferable urban condition that today's Manila has degenerated into.

The city seems to have never recovered from the urban damage done by World War II that will continue to be followed by even more horrors of urban damage inflicted on our Manilahs by citizens and leaders.

The Sta. Cruz Church Parish Pastoral Council published "Santa Cruz Church: A Living Heritage." The book is difficult to find. However Ms Bindoro at the Sta. Cruz Church Parish Office (tel. 7330345) will take orders. Call 7330345.

Heritage watch in Bohol

A heritage vigilante guarding ancestral homes in Bohol province has intervened to demolition due to a highway construction, between this space that Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) assistant Secretary Rafael Yalon transmitted a fax message to the National Historical Institute, confirming the agreement reached at an inter-agency meeting held on late 2004 to redesign the proposed highway in Baclayon to avoid the heritage houses.

DPWH Secretary Florante Soriquez assured PCCA executive director Cecile Alvarez at a recent meeting that destruction of heritage houses would definitely not happen in Baclayon.

The question remains whether the Bohol DPWH is aware of the concessions made by their Manila superiors.

E-mail feedback to philjahn@hotmail.com

CANADIAN ARTIST IN FORUM

THE EMBASSY of Canada and Ateneo Art Gallery are holding "Art speak with Graham Thompson" on Feb. 15, 4 p.m., at the Ateneo Art Gallery.

Thompson is a new media artist and a member of the Haida Fine Haidaga and group of British Columbia. Above is "North, South, East, West: Old Cultures, New Media."

Apostle of self-reflexivity

By Constantino C. Tejero

ARTISTS' manifestations of art has been occurring in various quarters. The ordinary gallery-goer stepping into an exhibition area for a simple aesthetic experience may be disconcerted to find himself is expected to an intellectual engagement.

Some artists—more or less young. One still have a lot of explanation to discover pushing to the limit and to various directions the idea of "art as embodied meaning." So much so that it ceases to be another form of conventional art.

In this respect, nothing could be more self-reflexive than "Cognitive Confiscations." Bruno Mayo's nine pieces in oil and one digital print (scroll to chapbook in The Big 8 Hotel Art Co. of the Artwalk, U/4, Bldg. A, Old Magsaysay, Quezon City.

More than anything, every artwork here is about itself: its conception, creation, being and attributes. The whole exhibit appears like a showcase of Filipino modern art since early 19th century.

It is, in fact, a visual exegesis of Modernism, art theories from Duchamp to Baldessari. The intellectualization is reinforced by the rhetorical artist's statement posted on the gallery wall, and by the pieces' rather high-flown titles, straddling in three allusiveness.

Mayo says it's his way of "reconfiguring images and reworking various techniques and approaches of the modern masters."

As with any postmodernist convention, what we have here are revisions and reinterpretations. An innocuous picture or its realist image properly translated can achieve unbridled viewership.

Power of arrangement

A prime example of Mayo's deconstruction, his art's self-reflexivity, and what he calls "cognitive confiscation" (simply knowing appropriation) would be the show's centerpiece, "In the Spirit of Mondrian," a mixed-size, multi-eye digital print.

A psychedelic-eye view of cityscapes is superimposed with floating blue and golden-brown images of Leonardo's Mona Lisa, a Renaissance Madonna, three abstract canvases, a wooden triangle, a strange-looking bird, and the inscription "Je viscerally, LOVE, RALISE.

Mayo explains the inscription refers to One thing I'd like for his artistic recordings of the "Mona Lisa." The same image is both bird and rabbit. He sees symbolizing dual perception and relativity, touching on a theory of representation and the psychology of perception. The triangle, a flat picture with a three-dimensional illusion, signifies the power of particular arrangement to art.

"Confiscating a Kelly Thomson[illegible] incorporates Art Incubated" has overlapping planes of red, blue and green, with a blood-red cynical image. Framed by a lancet arch, of a line drawing of a weeping madonna and bust gazing in front of a severed head of a horse nailed on the wall, canvassing with tears and blood.

The planes of flat color are from Ellsworth Kelly's spectrally from the Neo-Painterly specimen "Red Blue Green Yellow." The use of line drawing (Guinevere Rhoda says he has appropriated from Florina more than Duchamp.

He refers to The French Dadaist's interlapping and transparency series. The meaning of dissociated elements, he adds, is an overlooked aspect of Picasso's art making.

"NEO-PLATONISM: Confiscations with Tension"

Merging of philosophies

"Neo-Platonism Confiscations with Tension," in red, yellow, sap-green and neon-green, reproduces the grid and icon of Mondrian's "Composition." By superimposing on it an olive-green line drawing of a Chinese painting of an old man on a promontory contemplating the waves, Rhoda fuses Oriental and Western aesthetics.

"Metaphysician's Song" is an abstraction, in cobalt blue, turquoise, umber and black, four superimposed with a modified distortion of Prince Charming and the Bee Maiden.

"Reinventing a Jewelry (Emotional) Accessories Box Instead," is a mixed-sap-green with umber, incorporating outlined with enameled black dots. looks like tortoise print. Possible, we don't know which aspect of Rhoda's work it is alluding to. And what's with that parenthetical clause?

"Midweek Just We Appear" is background with two planes in white and gray, the paint brushed so that it attains a warped look. Outlined in orange on the picture, of bold to a dark-toned brushstroke arranging the mirroring line. Strips of green, brown, red, yellow, white, turquoise and ultramarine float like balloons in a children's poetry.

Rhoda says he is referencing here to Malevich's circles, and speculating what the Russian Suprematist would be painting were he to work today. "Under the current thinking about art and the world, Mondrian et al. would have been motivated to do essentially what art."

Immersion in theories

The concept of image-making is expressed in varying degrees in the other pieces.

"Propelling to Forget Geometric Painting," in navy-brown, shows a subdivided multi and its subdivided superficial to complexity.

Similar to it is "Picture from Lower Studio," but in olive green and black, showing a skimpy multi, its hazy reflections and a red outline of another multi which could also be seen as an ogling face.

"Painting Metaphysics" is another monochrome in sap-green, ochre, umber. The overpainting gives the piece texture and the look of an ethnic weave.

Similar in it is "Picture from Higher Model," but now rendered in yellow-green, ochre, sap-green, black and brown.

Highly confrontational, this is art that can only come from someone deeply immersed in art theories.

Rhoda majored in Painting at Fine Academy of the Arts in Davao City. He has yet to finish his master's at Art History at University of the Philippines in Diliman.

He has been teaching Painting, Art Theory and Philippine Art History at the Institute of Architecture and Fine Arts of Ateneo de Davao University.

In 2002, he won the Juror's Choice at the Sasa Art Awards in Davao.

"CONFISCATING a Kelly"

"IN THE SPIRIT of Mondrian"